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EIT Regional Innovation Scheme Annual Activity Report 2025

September 2026

EIT RIS Activity Report 2025

September 2026

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This document provides a comprehensive account of the EIT Regional Innovation Scheme (RIS) portfolio status for the 2025 reporting cycle, benchmarked against approved 2025 Business Plans of the EIT KICs and the Strategic Regional Innovations Cluster[1]. It offers an integrated overview of how EIT RIS funding has been allocated, deployed, and leveraged to advance the objectives of the EIT Strategic Innovation Agenda (SIA) 2021–2027, with a particular focus on reducing innovation disparities between European regions and fostering inclusive, sustainable growth in widening countries.

In line with the EIT RIS Implementation Framework, this report serves as an external communication and dissemination vehicle, highlighting results, good practices, success stories, and lessons learned from EIT Community activities delivered across EIT RIS countries and regions during 2025. The report draws on annual activity deliverables submitted by nine Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs), i.e. Climate KIC[2], InnoEnergy[3], 28DIGITAL[4], EIT Food, EIT Health, EIT Culture & Creativity, EIT RawMaterials, EIT Manufacturing and EIT Urban Mobility.

eit.europa.eu | climate-kic.org | eitdigital.eu (28digital.eu) | eitfood.eu | eithealth.eu | innoenergy.com | eitmanufacturing.eu | eitrawmaterials.eu | eiturbanmobility.eu | eit-culture-creativity.eu | eit-ris.eu

1. Strategic Regional Innovations Cluster 2023-2025 has been transformed into Regional Innovation and Internationalisation Cluster for the period of 2026-2028.
2. EIT Climate KIC was rebranded to Climate KIC in 2025, following the Memorandum of Cooperation with EIT.
3. EIT InnoEnergy was rebranded to InnoEnergy in 2025, following the Memorandum of Cooperation with EIT.
4. EIT Digital was rebranded to 28DIGITAL in 2025, following the Memorandum of Cooperation with EIT.

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1. Executive Summary

The EIT Regional Innovation Scheme (RIS), the EIT's main instrument for reducing Europe's regional innovation disparities, continued in 2025 to strengthen innovation capacity, entrepreneurship, education and skills development across Europe's Emerging and Moderate Innovator regions. By widening access to the EIT Community and connecting regional talent, businesses, higher education institutions and other innovation actors to European networks, EIT RIS directly contributes to the EU's objectives for a **more competitive, inclusive and cohesive Europe**, supporting the **New European Innovation Agenda**, **Horizon Europe's widening participation** and strengthening the **European Research Area**, and the EU's broader ambition to boost skills, entrepreneurship and innovation-driven growth across all regions. Moreover, EIT RIS aligns closely with the EIT's strategic mission and ambitiously contributes to key EU initiatives including the Union of Skills, the EU Startup and Scaleup Strategy.

EIT RIS results in 2025: scale, investment and impact

In 2025, the combined efforts of the **nine EIT Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs)** delivered measurable results across all EIT RIS-eligible countries and territories:

Innovation & Entrepreneurship

910
startups and scaleups were created or supported

579.29 million
in external investment attracted by EIT RIS-supported ventures

Education & Talent

71,445
participated in EIT RIS education and skills-development activities

Ecosystem Development

1,680
partners were engaged in strengthening regional innovation ecosystems

The €579.29 million investment result represents the **strongest single-year investment performance since the launch of the current EIT Strategic Innovation Agenda in 2021**, demonstrating the increasing ability of EIT RIS-supported ventures to progress from capacity building towards commercialisation and investment readiness.

Together, these results demonstrate the continued evolution of EIT RIS from primarily a capacity-building instrument towards **a maturing regional innovation ecosystem that generates measurable economic, societal and territorial impact**.

The 2025 results point to an increasingly mature EIT RIS portfolio. Compared with 2024, participation and startup creation decreased by around 20%, while **investment attracted by EIT RIS-supported ventures increased by 147%** and intellectual property outputs rose by **21%**. This shift suggests that the programme is increasingly supporting ventures further along the innovation journey: **fewer, but more investable ventures are progressing towards growth, commercialisation and market impact**.

The geographical distribution of investment also highlights the diversity of EIT RIS performance. EIT KIC-supported startups in Spain, Israel and Romania attracted 70% of the total investment secured by the EIT KIC-supported startups in the EIT RIS eligible area, in 2025. Estonia was the strongest performer in terms of investment leverage for the second consecutive year, attracting approximately **€16.65 for every €1 of EIT grant funding**, compared with **€6.99 in Romania**, the next-best performing country.

Ukraine: innovation and skills development under extraordinary conditions

Ukraine stands out as a particularly important example of the resilience and relevance of EIT RIS. In 2025, as we marked the third anniversary Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the EIT reaffirmed its commitment to supporting Ukraine's innovators, startups, and academic institutions in 2025[5]. Since 2022, the EIT has launched multiple initiatives to foster resilience, nurture talent, and drive economic revitalisation.

In 2025, ventures supported through EIT RIS in Ukraine attracted **10% more investment than in 2024**, while Ukrainian participation in EIT education activities increased by **more than 40% year-on-year**.

In 2025, the EIT strengthened its presence and activities in Ukraine, as EIT-backed activities continued to reach Ukrainian innovators, entrepreneurs and learners.

This included strong engagement with EIT-labelled programmes[6] such as EIT Jumpstarter and EIT InfraBooster. These results demonstrate that, in a context of exceptional pressure, targeted European support can help maintain innovation capacity, develop skills and connect Ukrainian innovators with European networks and opportunities.

5. Driving Innovation: The EIT's Ongoing Commitment to Ukraine in 2025 | EIT

6. The EIT Label is a quality label awarded to education and training programmes that meet EIT standards for innovation, entrepreneurship, practical learning, and collaboration between academia, research, and industry. It recognises programmes designed to equip participants with the skills to develop innovative ideas and translate them into real-world applications. For more please read the EIT entrepreneurial education: Learn from leaders of European innovation | EIT

A stronger place-based approach

In 2025, the EIT further strengthened the place-based dimension of EIT RIS through the launch of the **EIT Regional Innovation Booster**, a new flagship initiative providing targeted, commercially focused support to startups and scaleups in Emerging and Moderate Innovator countries. Co-designed with national stakeholders to respond to the specific needs of local startup ecosystems, the initiative was launched as a **pre-pilot in Poland in 2025** and is now being expanded to three additional Member States. It represents a shift towards more targeted, demand-driven support that combines EIT expertise with the priorities and capacities of individual regional ecosystems.

At the same time, the **EIT Community Hub network expanded significantly in 2025. Six new Hubs were created during 2025**[7], bringing the total network to 24 Hubs by the end of the year, compared with six at the start of the pilot two years earlier. By the end of 2025, the Hub network covered all EIT RIS-eligible countries and territories. These unified central access points extend the EIT's presence across Central, Eastern, and Southern Europe, the EU Outermost Regions, and the EU's neighbourhood, further reinforced by three new countries becoming EIT RIS-eligible in 2025: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Israel[8].

The Hubs provide local one-stop-shop access to the EIT Community, connecting entrepreneurs, higher education institutions, researchers, companies and public authorities with EIT KICs, programmes, expertise and funding opportunities. Their expansion across Central, Eastern and Southern Europe, the EU Outermost Regions and the EU neighbourhood strengthens the EIT's ability to translate European innovation opportunities into **place-based regional impact**.

A decade plus one: 2014–2025

Over eleven years, EIT RIS has evolved from a widening instrument into one of Horizon Europe's most consistent mechanisms for broadening participation in Europe's innovation ecosystem.

Since its launch in 2014, almost **400,000 people** have been upskilled through EIT education activities, **7,410 ventures** have been created or supported, and EIT RIS-supported ventures have attracted **€3.81 billion in investment**.

EIT RIS countries and territories now account for approximately **60% of participation in EIT activities**, compared with around **40% of participation under Horizon Europe as a whole**[9], demonstrating the strong contribution of the EIT Community to the EU's widening and inclusion objectives. These achievements represent significant progress in broadening access to Europe's innovation ecosystem.

7. Romania, French Outermost Regions, Slovakia, Greece, Lithuania, Serbia
8. As per the European Innovation Scoreboard
9. As per the Horizon Europe Dashboard EU Funding & Tenders Portal



The EIT Regional Innovation Scheme (RIS) is a symbol of how we have tangible impact - building bridges to empower innovators across Europe. More startups from **all** countries are joining EIT programmes, attracting investment, and bringing innovative products to market. These achievements are real and well documented. **However, increased participation must lead to closing the deeper, systemic innovation gap, which remains a longer-term challenge.** As the EIT entered the next three-year strategic implementation period (2026–2028), the EIT RIS activities can and will build on these achievements by strengthening regional innovation capacity, expanding opportunities for cross-sector to investment, and scaling successful approaches across Europe's widening regions.

Stefan Dobrev

Chairperson of the EIT Governing Board & Executive Committee,
Managing Director at Innovation Ventures LLC



Europe's future competitiveness in the global market depends on our ability to unlock innovation and entrepreneurial potential in every region. The achievements of the EIT Regional Innovation Scheme demonstrate how targeted support, strong partnerships, enhanced networking, along with adequate education and skills across all regions can equip individuals with the knowledge and capabilities to thrive and to stimulate growth across Europe. **With the activities of the EIT in RIS-eligible countries, we are making tangible progress towards a more cohesive, innovative and competitive Union.**

Normunds Popens

Deputy Director-General of the Directorate-General for Education,
Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC) at the European Commission

The EIT RIS therefore remains central to the EIT's ambition of building a more connected, inclusive and competitive European innovation ecosystem, while contributing to the EU's wider objectives for regional cohesion, innovation, skills development and competitiveness.

Looking ahead: turning regional potential into lasting impact

The next phase of EIT RIS will focus increasingly on converting participation and capacity into sustainable innovation, investment, skills and economic impact. With 24 EIT Community Hubs covering every EIT RIS-eligible country and territory, the EIT has established a stronger local infrastructure for delivering this ambition in 2025. The EIT Regional Innovation Booster, moving from its 2025 pre-pilot in Poland towards broader implementation from 2026 and full deployment from 2029, will add a commercially focused mechanism designed to help promising regional ventures move towards investment and growth. The initiative is backed by approximately €30 million in dedicated investment.

Together, these developments strengthen the EIT's capacity to connect regional talent and innovation assets with European expertise, networks, investment and markets. The direction is clear: from widening participation to building lasting regional innovation capacity; from local potential to European scale; and from individual interventions to stronger, more connected innovation ecosystems.

2. About 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, known as EIT Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) among leading companies, research labs, and universities. In 2025, ten EIT Knowledge and Innovation Communities were supported: Climate KIC, 28DIGITAL, InnoEnergy, EIT Health, EIT RawMaterials, EIT Food, EIT Manufacturing[10], EIT Urban Mobility, EIT Culture & Creativity, and EIT Water.



Figure 1. EIT Knowledge and Innovation Communities

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. To date, these have resulted in:

10. Statement on EIT Manufacturing and Support for Beneficiaries | EIT

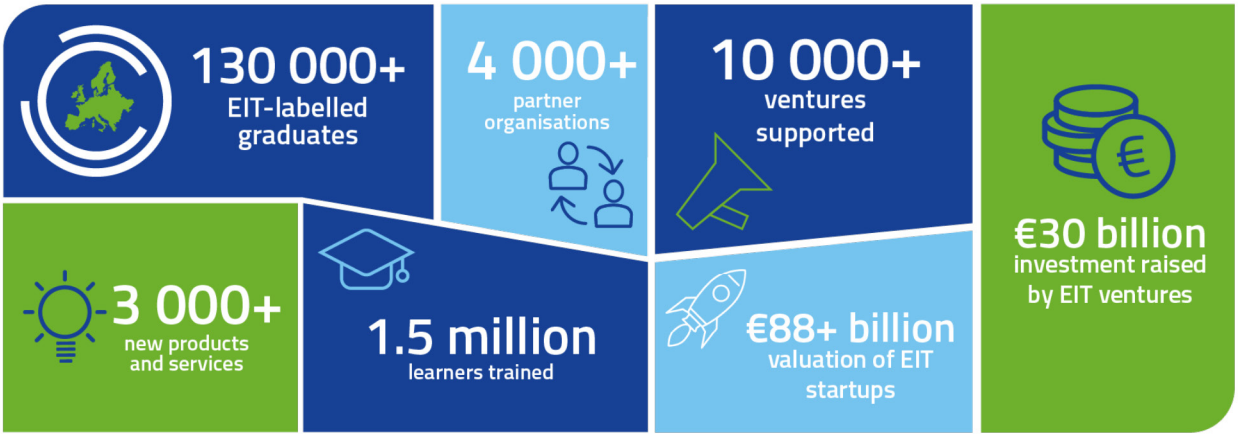


Figure 2. Cumulative impact of the EIT Community since 2014

Horizon Europe is the EU's €95.5 billion research and innovation programme, focused on climate action, the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and enhancing the EU's global competitiveness and economic growth. The EIT plays a key role in Pillar 3 of Horizon Europe's 'Innovative Europe'. With a €3 billion budget (between 2021-2027), it strengthens sustainable innovation ecosystems and supports entrepreneurial education, which includes lifelong learning, university engagement, and bringing solutions to global challenges to market.

Building on 15 years of impact in innovation, skills, and entrepreneurship, the EIT Governing Board's 2025 Future Vision Paper sets out how the Institute aims to tackle the EU's key challenges under the next Framework Programme:

- It plans to expand into key areas such as security, AI and robotics, and rural innovation.
- To bridge the innovation gap, the new EIT Regional Innovation Booster will enhance startup creation and investor matchmaking, particularly in Central, Eastern, and Southern Europe.
- The paper envisions that an enhanced EIT Innovation Campus will streamline access to education and skills programmes, with a focus on meeting industry needs and supporting women entrepreneurs.
- Finally, the EIT will reinforce synergies by aligning with other EU bodies to set up a pipeline of support between knowledge creation, knowledge commercialisation and startup creation (through the EIT), and startup scaling.



OUR VISION TO:

Become the leading European initiative that empowers innovators and entrepreneurs to develop world-class solutions to societal challenges and create growth and skilled jobs.



OUR MISSION TO:

Increase Europe's competitiveness, its sustainable economic growth and job creation by promoting and strengthening cooperation among leading business, education and research organisations.

EIT's legal basis is the EIT Regulation that sets out its mission, its key tasks and the framework for its functioning. The EIT's strategy, priorities, objectives, key measures, activities, mode of operation and expected impacts are presented in the EIT Strategic Innovation Agenda 2021–2027.

3. EIT Regional Innovation Scheme

The EIT launched the EIT Regional Innovation Scheme (EIT RIS) in 2014 as its main tool for reducing Europe's regional innovation disparities. It helps innovators from eligible countries and territories gain place-based access to EIT activities, foster connections among regional innovation actors, and provides bespoke programmes to support Moderate and Emerging Innovator countries, as well as the EU's Outermost Regions, in building their innovation capacity. EIT RIS activities are tailored to meet the diverse innovation needs of eligible countries based on their scores on the European Innovation Scoreboard.

The scheme has been greatly enhanced to increase the EIT Community's regional impact in line with the EIT Strategic Innovation Agenda 2021-2027. The EIT RIS also focuses on the EU's Outermost Regions to foster their integration into the EIT Community and the European innovation ecosystem. The EIT RIS Implementation Framework provides guidance to KICs in implementing the enhanced EIT RIS and fully delivering on the following objectives:

1. **Improve the innovation capacities of the local ecosystem** via capacity-building activities, fostering closer interactions between local clusters, networks, regional public authorities, higher education institutions (HEIs), research organisations, vocational education and training (VET) institutions, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and other innovation actors.

2. **Attract new partners in the EIT KICs** and link local innovation ecosystems to pan-European innovation ecosystems.

3. **Serve as a bridge towards relevant R&I strategies for smart specialisation.**

4. **Leverage additional private and public funding**, with particular attention to European Structural and investment funds (ESIF).

Example from Albania

Harvesting innovations in Albania (2025) – how did multi-sector capacity-building series of events support local innovation ecosystem

Following the launch of the EIT Community Hub Albania on 10 February 2025, the Hub organised a sequence of sector-specific national capacity-building events throughout the year, each pairing a different EIT KIC with a relevant Albanian sector:

- **„Harvesting Innovation with EIT Food"** (28 May 2025), focused on agritech and food innovative technologies and solutions;
- **„Harvesting Innovation – Boosting Albania's Digital Leap"** (18 June 2025), organised with support of 28DIGITAL to stimulate discussion on AI, cybersecurity and new technologies;
- **„Harvesting Innovation with EIT Manufacturing – Transforming Albania's Manufacturing Landscape"** (19–20 November 2025), a two-day flagship event gathering industry, academia, SMEs, public institutions, and innovation-support organisations, with panels covering the automotive, aerospace, steel, textile, and footwear sectors;
- **„Harvesting Innovation with EIT Health – Addressing Albania's Health Priorities"**, organised with Barleti University, bringing together health leaders, academia, SMEs and innovators (scheduled for 18 March 2026).

Which countries are eligible[11]?

17 EU Member States

Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain.

8 Horizon Europe Associated Third Countries

Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Israel, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Türkiye, Ukraine.

9 EU Outermost Regions

Guadeloupe, French Guiana, Réunion, Martinique, Mayotte and Saint-Martin (France), the Azores and Madeira (Portugal), the Canary Islands (Spain).

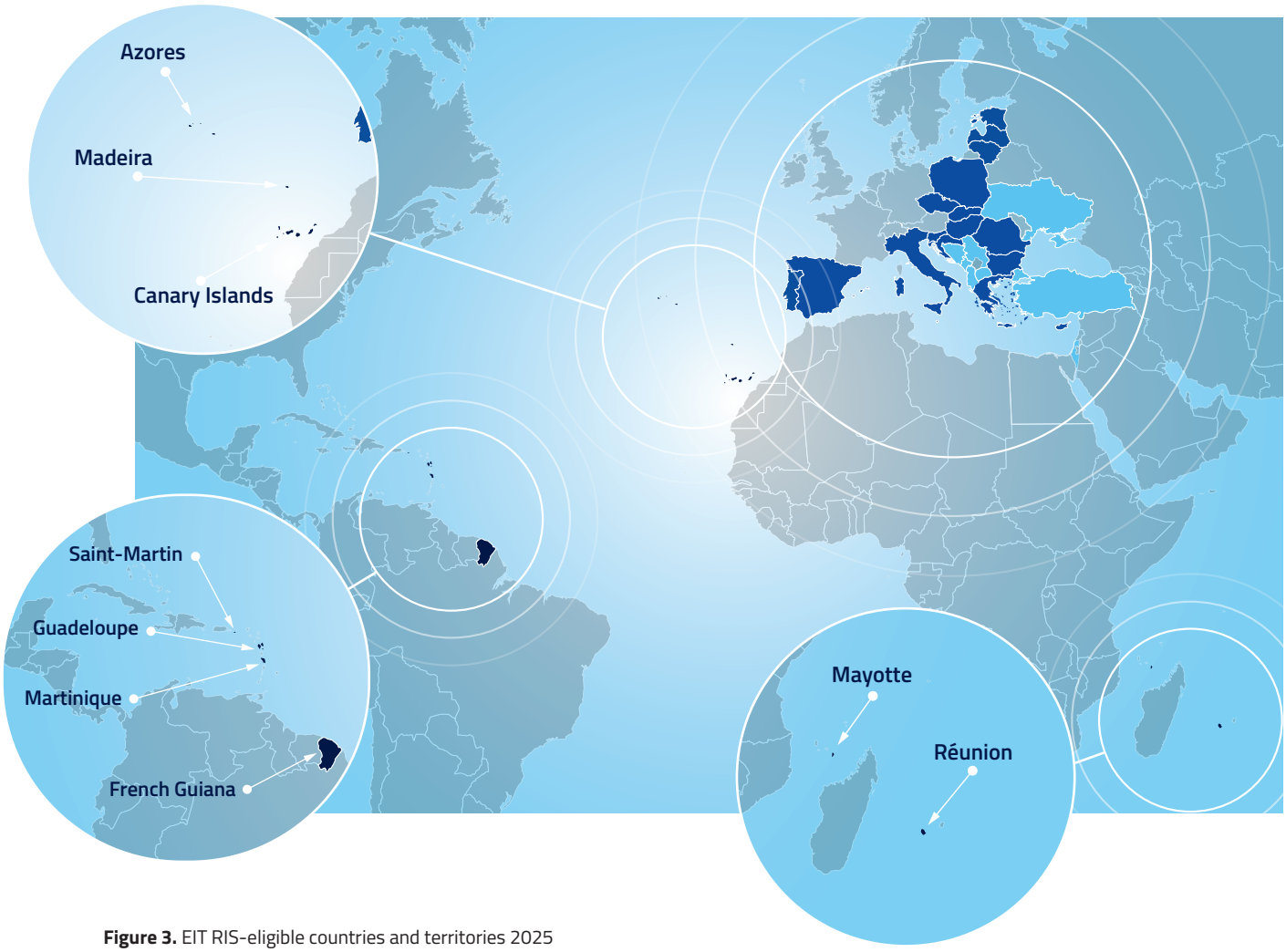


Figure 3. EIT RIS-eligible countries and territories 2025

11. For the period of 2025-2027. The eligibility for the EIT RIS is outlined in Article 2 of EIT Regulation and the EIT SIA 2021-2027. Countries and regions eligible for EIT RIS activities are those countries and their regions identified as either Moderate or Modest / Emerging Innovator in at least one of the three European Innovation Scoreboard (EIS) annual reports issued in 2018, 2019 and 2020 for the period 2021-2024 and those identified as either Moderate or Modest / Emerging Innovator in at least one of the three EIS annual reports issued in 2021, 2022 and 2023 for the period 2025-2027, as well as the EU Outermost Regions as defined in Article 349 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU).



In 2025, we established a dedicated EIT Regional Innovation Scheme Panel to support our Knowledge and Innovation Communities in better strengthening and coordinating their activities across Moderate and Emerging Innovator countries, and to provide a consistent framework for addressing horizontal RIS governance issues.

Luke Incorvaja
Innovation Officer at the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT)

EIT's Binding Commitment to the EIT RIS-eligible regions

≥15%
of aggregated EIT KIC KPI targets must come from EIT RIS countries/regions by 2027

10–15%
of total KIC funding allocated to EIT RIS activities

≥70%
of EIT RIS-funded activities are expected to require co-funding - up to 100% co-funding is permitted, but only exceptionally

Figure 4. EIT RIS Implementation Framework, 2025–2027

4. Impact Atlas: EIT Regional Innovation Scheme results 2025

In 2025, startups supported and created by the EIT KICs across the EIT RIS countries attracted more external investment than in any previous year - €579.3M marking a turning point in the scheme's ability to convert regional innovation potential into investor interest.

External investment attracted by EIT RIS-supported ventures rose by 147% year-on-year. Even though, the growth is concentrated: Spain alone accounts for 60% of the 2025 total, other regions still grew meaningfully. Israel and Romania were the next-largest contributors to growth, together adding a further €70 million, while a genuine widening of the base is also visible in smaller markets: Croatia, Malta, and North Macedonia each moved from zero investment reported in 2024 to a positive figure in 2025. Also notably Cyprus grew from €75,000 to €10.8 million.

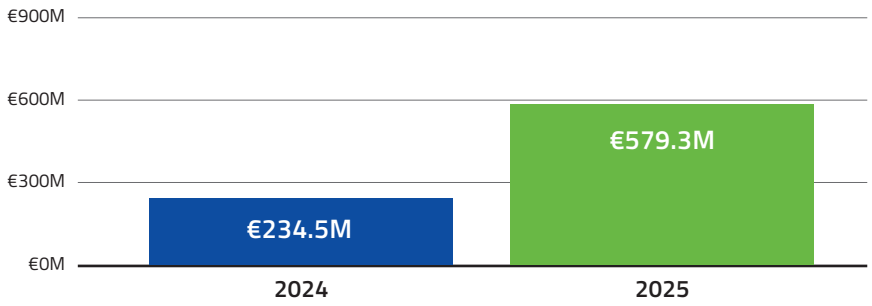


Figure 5. Total External Investment attracted by EIT RIS ventures, backed by EIT KICs in 2024 and 2025

On average, the capital landed behind each of the startups supported by the EIT RIS for each country in 2025 was three times the support in 2024 – on 20% fewer startups supported.

The moderate decline in startups support and creation in 2025 offset by very strong investment growth (+147%) and increased intellectual property outputs (+21%). The EIT RIS ecosystem evolution is moving from expansion to maturation. Startup creation slowing slightly, while venture quality improves and investment capacity accelerates.

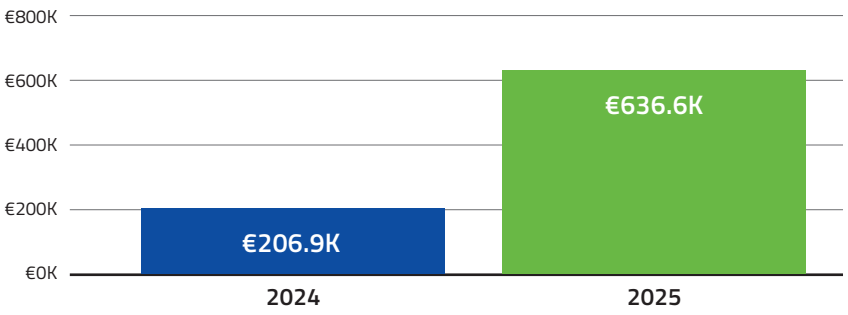


Figure 6. External investment attracted per EIT RIS startup supported

EIT RIS countries hold roughly a third to three-quarters of every headline EIT metric in 2025.

Metric	EIT in all countries (2025)	EIT in RIS area (2025)	EIT RIS share in the EIT total
Innovations launched on the market	359	194	**54%**
Participants in EIT Education	95,029	71,445	**75.2%**
Startups Created & Supported	1,969	910	**46.2%**
Investment attracted	€1,833,398,095	€579,298,890	**31.6%**

Figure 7. Comparison of key metrics measured by EIT - all regions vs. EIT RIS regions (2025). EIT Data as of 1 June 2026.

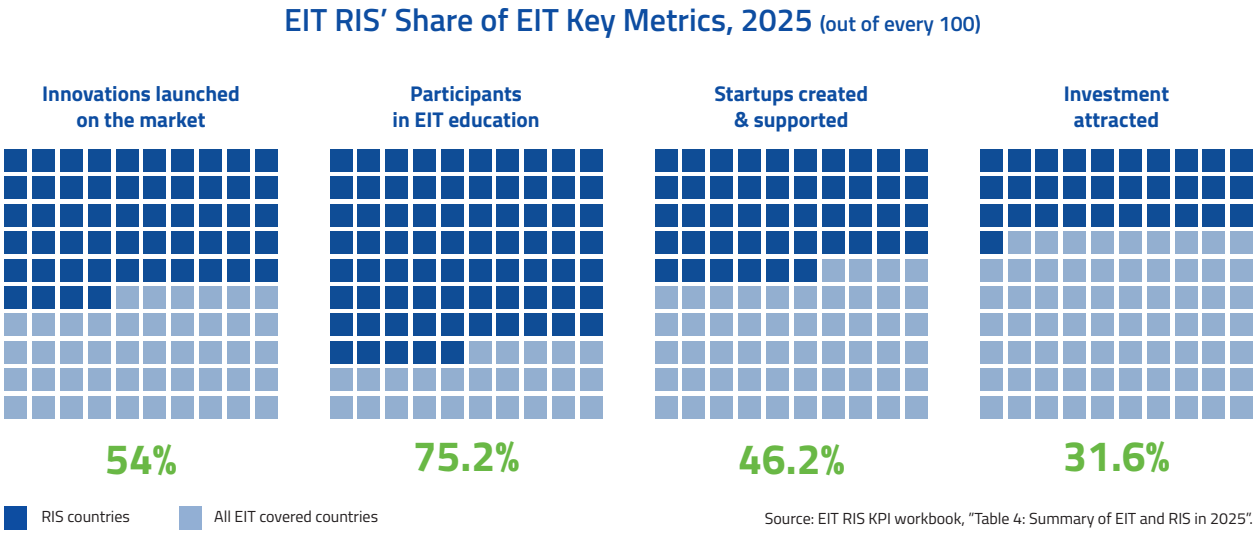


Figure 8. EIT RIS countries % share of EIT key metrics 2025

The participation rates for EIT RIS countries in all EIT Community activities show a high level of stability over time, consistently accounting for approx. **60% of participation in EIT activities**, compared to around **40% in Horizon Europe**. The EIT RIS programme functions effectively as a mechanism, facilitating access to European Union opportunities for all eligible countries. This evolution reflects a clear progression: from capacity-building and ecosystem development towards impact generation and economic value creation. The combined impact of EIT RIS activities across the nine reporting KICs in 2025 is exceptional.

4.1. Results 2021–2025

Since 2021, the EIT RIS has increased its share in the overall results of EIT support. EIT RIS countries were responsible for three-quarters of all EIT education participation in 2021–2025, and over half of the startups created and supported came from the EIT RIS region. Similarly, roughly one in every two EIT-backed innovations launched on the market between 2021 and 2025 was brought to market by an EIT RIS innovator.

EIT RIS country share of EIT key metrics, 2021–2025

Metric	EIT RIS (2021–2025)	EIT in All Countries (2021–2025)	EIT RIS share in the EIT total
Innovations launched on the market	915	1,704	**53.7%**
Participants in education and training	381,955	500,591	**76.3%**
Startups created & supported	6,200	10,711	**58%**
Investment attracted	€1,86BN	€13.02BN	**14.3%**

Figure 9. EIT RIS impact 2021–2025, shown against its share of the cumulative EIT total for the same period

The total EIT grant, 2021-2025[12], by RIS country, shows that Spain alone accounted for more than the next four countries combined. However, if the 2021–2025 EIT grant is divided by population, it shows that Spain's dominance in absolute funding is not simply a function of its size: at €5.82 per capita it ranks fourth among EIT RIS-eligible countries, behind only Estonia (€9.87), Slovenia (€9.56) and Malta (€6.00).

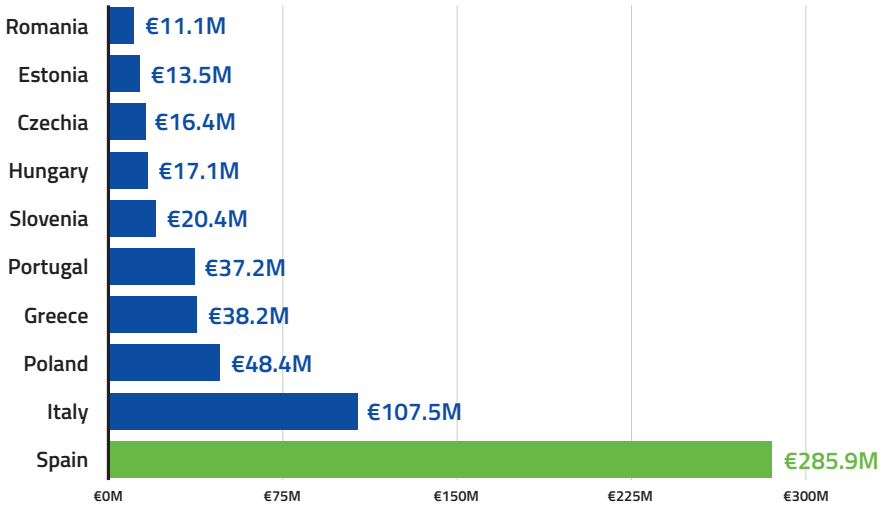


Figure 10. Total EIT grant to beneficiaries in EIT RIS countries 2021-2025

12. 2021-2025 data contain 2021-2022 confirmed data and 2023-2025 committed amounts.

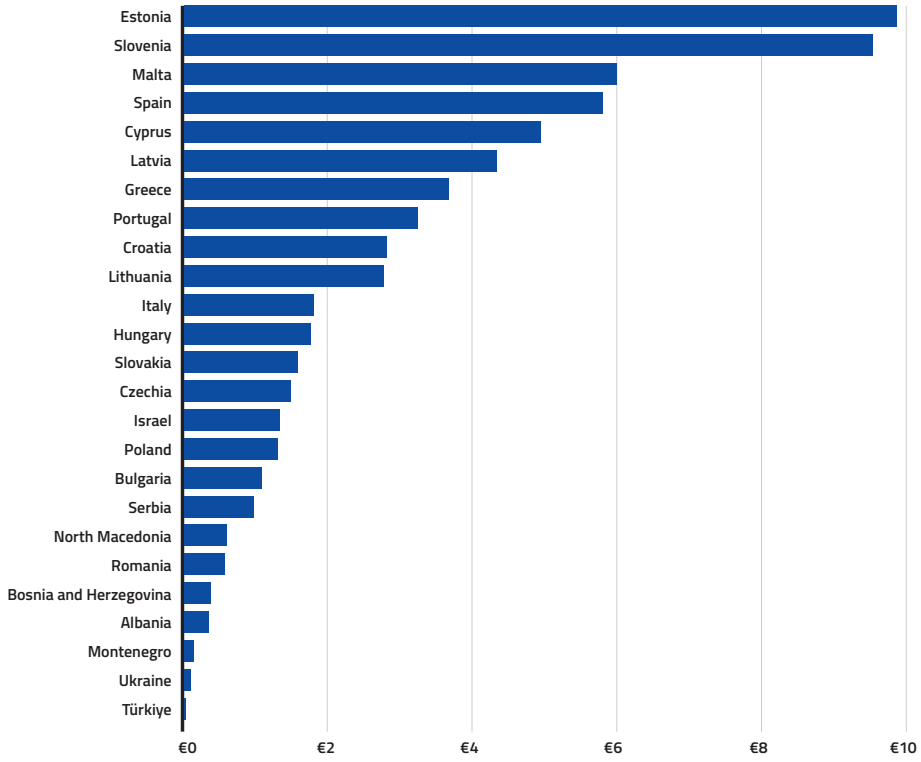


Figure 11. EIT grant per capita in EIT RIS-eligible countries, 2021–2025 (€)

The population data sourced in Eurostat, 1 January 2025, UN estimations for Ukraine and the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics.

The wide spread, from almost €10 per person in Estonia to €0.05 in Türkiye, shows that EIT funding reaches EIT RIS-eligible countries at very different intensities. Smaller EU Member States such as Estonia, Slovenia, Malta and Cyprus receive the most per capita, while the Western Balkans, Ukraine and Türkiye receive the least.

4.2. A decade plus one of EIT Regional Innovation Scheme

A decade plus one of EIT RIS reveals a scale of impact that no KPI table can fully convey. Nearly 400,000 people upskilled is close to the entire population of Iceland passing through an EIT classroom. The 7,410 ventures created or supported since 2014 equate to an average of almost two ventures every day over the scheme's lifetime, with the large majority supported since 2021. Moreover, the €3.81 billion attracted by EIT RIS-backed ventures is real capital pulled into Moderate and Emerging Innovator regions.

People skilled / upskilled

395,445

324,000 (2014-24)
+ 71,445 (2025)

Ventures created & supported

7,410

6,500 (2014-24)
+ 910 (2025)

External investment attracted (€M)

€3.81 billion

€ 3.23B (2014-24)
+ €579.29M (2025)

Figure 12. EIT RIS statistics since 2014



EIT Community Hubs:
One Local Door to the Entire EIT Community

EIT Community Hubs: One Local Door to the Entire EIT Community

By the end of 2025, one of the most significant, yet natural, transition of the local touchpoints was completed. The sector-specific hubs (EIT RIS Hubs), developed since 2014, have been fully integrated into the local EIT Community Hubs, creating greater efficiency and a simplified point of access to the network.

The rollout of this transition began in 2023, aimed at improving the EIT Community's penetration of local ecosystems and its reach with stakeholders on the ground. As a result, the regions now benefit from more empowered support - both general and sector-specific - in one place. The EIT Community Hubs complement also the EIT National Contact Points appointed in each EIT RIS-eligible country, who help raise awareness of the EIT KICs' offerings, support the local network, and liaise with national-level contacts.

The EIT Community Hubs support the implementation of key EU policy priorities across the KIC sectors: climate, energy, digitalisation, health, food systems, urban mobility, raw materials, culture and creativity, and water. Their work is aligned with the Green Deal, the Digital Decade, the New European Bauhaus, and the EU Industrial Strategy, and contributes to the European Startup and Scaleup Strategy and the New European Innovation Agenda by strengthening innovation ecosystems, easing access to finance and markets, and helping high-impact startups scale. They also reinforce the role of higher education institutions through entrepreneurship education and knowledge transfer.

Each Hub functions as a local one-stop shop, bringing the full breadth of the EIT Community's offer - across all KICs - into a single point of contact on the ground (EIT Community Officer). Rather than innovators having to navigate separate KIC networks, the Hub connects entrepreneurs, researchers, and public authorities directly to the opportunities, funding calls, and expertise relevant to their region. This place-based model is what allows EIT RIS to translate a pan-European network into tangible, local access.

WHAT EIT COMMUNITY HUB DOES

Pillar 1

Information & Gateway

A single source of information on all EIT services and opportunities, and a gateway to all EIT KICs. The Hub attracts and engages a growing number of participants in EIT Community activities – startups, students, researchers and innovators.

Pillar 2

Local Engagement

The Hub leads the EIT Community's engagement with national authorities and liaises with National Contact Points, the Enterprise Europe Network, COST coordinators and other innovation stakeholders. It supports talent retention by linking the region to EIT's international knowledge ecosystem.

Pillar 3

Business Development & Funding

The Hub facilitates partnerships between EIT KICs and public authorities, funding bodies, industry and investors. It connects regional and national funding to KIC priorities and raises external funding for joint KIC projects, strengthening financial sustainability.

At the centre of each Hub there is an EIT Community Officer (ECO): a dedicated, visible representative of the EIT Community embedded in the country or region they serve. The ECOs actively facilitate the flow of information between local stakeholders and the EIT Community, identify opportunities for regional actors to plug into EIT programmes, and help integrate new partners into the broader innovation network. Each Hub operates under the supervision of a designated KIC, which contracts the ECO and oversees their work through carrying out performance assessments, ensuring consistency and accountability across the network even as it scales rapidly.

In 2025 alone, EIT Community Officers identified 112 new partners to the EIT Community, scouted more than 335 potential applicants, and made 166 startup/scaleup referrals into EIT KIC pipelines. In 2025, new Hubs were established in Serbia, French Outermost Regions, Romania, Slovakia, Greece, Lithuania.

Several EIT Community Hubs, already formally established in 2024, organised inaugural kick-off events in 2025 gathering representatives of national authorities, European Commission, academia, industry, and research local ecosystems.



Figure 13. EIT Community Hub Hungary, inaugurated on 22 January 2025 in Budapest



Figure 14. EIT Community Hub Estonia, launched on 29 January 2025 in Tartu



Figure 15. EIT Community Hub Albania, inaugurated on 10 February 2025 in Tirana



Figure 16. EIT Community Hub Türkiye, launched on 12 February 2025 in Ankara



Figure 17. EIT Community Hub Italy, launched on 18 February 2025 in Bologna



Figure 18. EIT Community Hub Croatia, launched on 6 March 2025 in Zagreb



Figure 19. EIT Community Hub Romania, launched on 20 March 2025 in Bucharest



Figure 20. EIT Community Hub Spain and its Outermost Regions, inaugurated on 27 March 2025 in Madrid



Figure 21. EIT Community Hub Poland, launched on 13 May 2025 in Warsaw



Figure 22. EIT Community Hub Bulgaria, launched on 20 June 2025 in Sofia



Figure 23. EIT Community Hub Portugal and its Outermost Regions, launched on 10 July 2025 in Lisbon



Figure 24. EIT Community Hub Slovakia, inaugurated on 11 September 2025 in Košice



Figure 25. EIT Community Hub Greece, launched on 24 October 2025 in Athens



Figure 26. EIT Community Hub Serbia, launched on 28 October 2025 in Belgrade



Figure 27. EIT Community Hub French Outermost Regions, launched in Paris on 28 November 2025

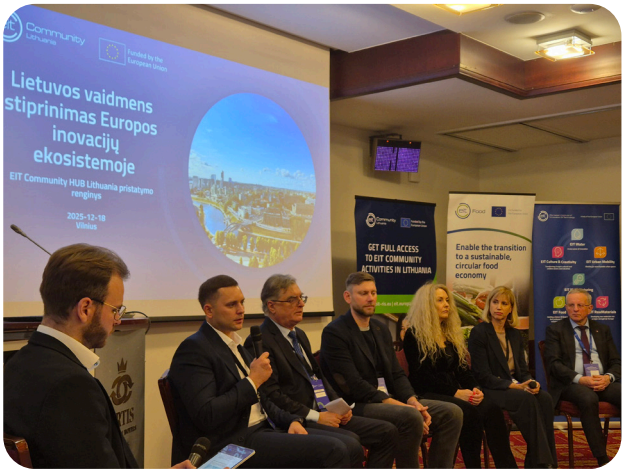


Figure 28. EIT Community Hub Lithuania, inaugurated on 18 December 2025 in Vilnius

STORY OF IMPACT

From local discovery to European Award: how the EIT Community Hub Hungary backed a new venture

In November 2025, with the support of the EIT Community Hub in Hungary, the startup MycoNest won the New European Bauhaus cohort of the EIT Jumpstarter. MycoNest makes biodegradable mycelium artificial habitats that bring life back to sites filled with pillars, fences, and hard surfaces: from solar parks to substations, railways, and roadsides. The team was selected among 900 applications.

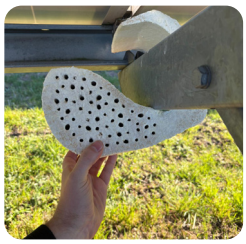






Figure 29. The MycoNest product and the founder

Building innovation skills in Ukrainian cities, thanks to the support of EIT Community Hub Ukraine

Since May 2025, Zhytomyr Polytechnic State University has been a partner of UrbanElevate, an EIT Urban Mobility initiative to strengthen entrepreneurial and innovation skills in Ukrainian cities, with support from the EIT Community Hub Ukraine. Through this partnership, the city of Zhytomyr brought 15 schools into the EIT Girls Go Circular initiative, equipping girls aged 14–19 with skills in digital technology and entrepreneurship. Dedicated acceleration activities also supported 16 startups developing innovative solutions for Ukrainian cities in 2025.



Figure 30. The Urban Elevate

New partners joining the EIT network

Digital Dalmatia, a project initiated by Split-Dalmatia County to develop the ICT sector and build a startup ecosystem in the region, joined 28DIGITAL thanks to the support of the EIT Community Hub Croatia.

Digital Dalmatia supports the growth of the regional startup ecosystem through startup upskilling, accelerator programmes, meetups, conferences, access to mentors and investors. Its educational initiatives include coding, AI, cybersecurity, digital marketing, graphic design, and other in-demand digital skills.



Figure 31. Digital Dalmatia / 28DIGITAL

Multiplying impact with other EU instruments

The EIT Community and the European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST) work closely together, enabling synergies between the two networks, for instance, in supporting researchers to get the right support from both institutions on their innovation journey.



The synergy between COST Association and the EIT Community demonstrates how complementary European initiatives can join forces and nurture the talent-base to maximise impact. Our cooperation at the level of COST National Contact Points and EIT Community Officers enables broader outreach, stronger engagement, and more effective support for innovators and researchers across Europe.

Katalin Alfoldi
COST Policy Advisor

5. Connecting with innovation ecosystems in EU Neighbourhood Regions

The EIT Regional Innovation Scheme (RIS) is EIT's main instrument for addressing regional innovation gaps through a place-based approach, tailoring support to the specific innovation needs, strengths and ecosystems of individual regions and working closely with local partners on the ground. The EIT RIS currently covers 17 EU Member States, eight Horizon Europe Associated Countries, and the Outermost Regions of France, Portugal and Spain, with support delivered through local EIT KIC Country Representatives (former EIT RIS Hubs) and EIT Community Hubs[13]. In addition, dedicated EIT actions are available in non-RIS-eligible Horizon Europe Associated economies, including Moldova, Kosovo*[14] and Armenia, from 2026 onwards.

Western Balkans

The Western Balkans are treated as a priority engagement area for the EIT. During the current programming period (2021-2027), the EIT has prioritised deeper engagement with the Western Balkan economies, with all EIT KICs launching activities, individually and jointly, to support Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Kosovo*. The region is still in the early stages of ecosystem-building, with participation strongly outpacing venture-scale outcomes. Nearly 26,000 people took part in EIT education and training in 2021-2025, by far the region's strongest metric, yet this broad base of engagement has not yet translated into commensurate innovation output: only 19 innovations reached the market and just 13 IP rights were registered across all six countries combined. It is worth mentioning that Serbia alone accounted for 85% of the region's IP rights, 74% of innovations launched, and 43% of both startups supported and education participants. Most strikingly, Serbia represents 99% of all investment attracted across the Western Balkans (€5.29 million of €5.34 million).



13. The EIT Regional Innovation Scheme (RIS): Closing the innovation divide in Europe | EIT
14. This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence

In 2025 'The Western Balkans Startup Ecosystem at the Crossroads' Report was published as a joint effort by the EIT, the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), and the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN). The study provided a unified, evidence-based view of the startup ecosystem's landscape, highlighting its strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities. By combining the EIT's expertise in innovation and entrepreneurship, the RCC's role in fostering regional integration, and the EEN's extensive SME support network, the report demonstrated the powerful synergies between European and regional actors. The Report highlighted ecosystem's strengths including a young, educated population and a thriving ICT sector with growing export revenues. A new generation of tech firms is emerging, focused on developing intellectual property and advanced business models rather than on mere service provision. A data-driven assessment, however, reveals a profound imbalance in the startup lifecycle: While there is a growing number of nascent ventures at the early "seed" stage, the pipeline narrows dramatically, with very few companies progressing to the "scaleup" phase. This challenge, often referred to as the "scaleup gap" is not unique to the region but reflects a broader problem which EIT tries to respond to by:



Establishment of EIT Community Hubs in the six economies of Western Balkans - in 2025 4 out of 6 economies had operating hubs: North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania and Serbia, with the next two: Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo* foreseen to inaugurate in 2026.

Dedicated package for Western Balkans operating until the end of 2025 covering programmes like EIT InfraBooster Western Balkans and Neighbouring Countries, which helped bringing 12 innovations to the market between 2023-2025.

Providing financial support and visibility to newly created startups through a flagship pre-accelerator, the EIT Jumpstarter with a dedicated Western Balkans horizontal cohort.

Raising international awareness of the Western Balkans ecosystem's potential by supporting narratives via events like „From knowledge to impact: Nurturing research and innovation in Southeast Europe", held on **October 21, 2025, at the University of Montenegro in Podgorica.** Organized by Science | Business and EIT Community, in tandem with the EU-Western Balkans Ministerial Meeting, the event brought together decision-makers to optimize the use of EU instruments (like Horizon Europe) and boost research and innovation capacities across the region.

Between 2020 and the end of 2025, almost 18,000 young people from the Western Balkans were supported through EIT Girls Go Circular, accounting for 19% of all programme participants in this period. Serbia alone represented 75% of the entire Western Balkans total. In the EIT Higher Education Institutions Initiative (EIT HEI) over the same period, 120 organisations from the six Western Balkans economies were selected as awardees. The largest share of awardees, approximately 36%, came from Serbia.

"From knowledge to impact: Nurturing research and innovation in Southeast Europe"

21 October 2025 I University of Montenegro, Podgorica
Organiser: Science | Business Widening
Partners: University of Montenegro, EIT Community, Policy Answers, SciDev and COST Association

Science | Business organised its first-ever event in Montenegro, following the Ministerial meeting of the Western Balkans Steering Platform on Research and Innovation, to debate the way forward, informed by "living" case studies of R&I in action. This public conference brought together leaders and decision makers from the region and beyond, and from the worlds of science, policy, industry and finance to share policy ideas, share good practices and develop recommendations to optimise the regional impact of EU instruments in the years ahead.



Martin Kern
Director of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT)

The EIT stays committed to strengthening the Western Balkans' innovation ecosystem and unlocking its full potential. Whether through Europe's largest innovation network or targeted programmes, the EIT Community is here to help talents, entrepreneurs, and organisations across the Western Balkans grow.





Figure 32. „From knowledge to impact" conference, Podgorica – 21 October 2025

High-Impact Innovation Activity - North Macedonia: Circular Economy in Focus

28 October 2025, Skopje

Building on the EIT's engagement in the Western Balkans, the EIT Community organised a flagship innovation event in Skopje focused on circular economy and textile waste management as part of the EnergoTehnoma fair, one of North Macedonia's largest industrial gatherings with over 5,000 participants. Opened by the country's newly established innovation agency, INOVA, the event showcased all nine EIT KICs and provided a comprehensive overview of the EIT ecosystem.

The event attracted 210 participants onsite and 324 online, generating strong media visibility through a dedicated press conference and multiple media placements. By linking EIT priorities to a key industrial and sustainability challenge, the activity strengthened the EIT Community's visibility and position as a trusted innovation partner in North Macedonia, while creating valuable connections with startups, institutions, and the media for future collaboration.



From supporting aspiring entrepreneurs to strengthening innovation capacity of universities, the EIT Community is helping turn North Macedonia's ideas and talent into tangible opportunities.

Agnes Molnar
EIT Innovation Support Officer at the European Institute of Innovation and Technology

STORY OF IMPACT

AquaBoostNano: an early-stage idea to help seeds survive the drought before it even begins

For farmers across Serbia and much of Southern Europe, drought is no longer a rare event - it's a recurring risk that can wipe out a season's yield before it fully forms. A Novi Sad-based team, created in the EIT Jumpstarter pre-acceleration programme, is tackling that risk at its earliest possible point: the seed itself. AquaBoostNano was founded in 2025 out of years of research in chemistry and nanotechnology. It has developed a nanoparticle-based seed treatment that prepares plants for drought stress and reduces yield losses, using specially developed carbon nanoparticles that activate plants' physiological stress responses, promote root growth, improve photosynthesis, and strengthen antioxidant defenses. The nanoparticles are fully biodegradable, letting AquaBoostNano offer an approach that is environmentally friendly, cost-effective, and fully compatible with how seed treatment already works, addressing food security and farmer income at the same time as sustainability. That combination of scientific depth and potential practical usability has quickly caught the attention of the wider European innovation ecosystem. In 2025 alone, the team was selected for RootCamp's Batch #7 accelerator in Hannover, Germany, joining a small cohort of European startups working on sustainable water, agriculture, and circular-economy solutions, and secured its first seed funding round, in August 2025, with RootCamp among its investors. The team was also chosen as one of the top four Serbian startups to take part in „Mission France 2025," a market-exploration programme culminating in VivaTech in Paris. That momentum carried through to the EIT Community's biggest stage of the year: at the EIT Jumpstarter 2025 Grand Finale in Budapest, AquaBoostNano placed among the top three teams in the Food & Agritech category and was awarded the Western Balkans Special Prize.



Figure 33. EIT Jumpstarter 2025 Grand Final in Budapest – the AquaBoostNano team won the Western Balkans Special Prize

Ukraine

The centerpiece of EIT's Ukraine engagement is the EIT Community Hub Ukraine, launched in Kyiv in December 2023 to further integrate the country into Europe's innovation landscape, serving as a central point of coordination for EIT activities in the country and connecting local businesses and educational institutions with European opportunities. Over the full 2021–2025 period, 318 startups were created or supported in Ukraine and 17,351 people took part in EIT education and training. Ukraine is placed among the more active participants in the EIT RIS group relative to its size, accounting for roughly 5% of the entire EIT RIS region's startup activity and 4.5% of its education participation. Investment attracted totaled just over €1.1 million across the period, and Ukraine received €4.7 million in direct EIT grant funding, alongside a further €52.5 million in Horizon Europe contributions.

2025 stands out as a turning point. This single year accounted for an outsized share of Ukraine's five-year total: 83 of the 318 startups created or supported (26%), and 7,191 of the 17,351 education participants (41%), came in 2025 alone. Education participation grew by 41% year-on-year: from 5,086 in 2024 to 7,191 in 2025. Investment attracted also slightly grew, from €455,250 in 2024 to €500,000 in 2025.

One clear gap stands out against this otherwise positive trend: innovations launched on the market remain minimal. While the country is successfully building entrepreneurial and educational capacity, converting that activity into market-ready innovations is still an emerging challenge, likely compounded by the operating environment.





Figure 34. EIT Red Kalyna and EIT Jumpstarter Grand Finals with participation of Ukrainian innovators 2025

Key programmes active in 2025

EIT Jumpstarter

Ukrainian teams have been a major share of participants, partly thanks to a dedicated „Rebuild Ukraine" cohort. In the 2025 edition, Ukrainian teams submitted **183 applications** out of 908 total (≈20% of all applicants), **with 42 teams** reaching the Grand Finale and **three Ukrainian teams** among the prize winners.

EIT Founders2Founders

focused on Ukrainian startups scaling internationally (TRL 3–5); it grew from **supporting 52 Ukrainian startups in 2023 to 70 in 2024 and 76 by 2025**, with 2025 winners spanning sectors including cybersecurity, medtech, and femtech.

EIT Red Kalyna

focuses on women's entrepreneurship and innovation by recognizing female role models. **Applications grew from 30 (2023) to 66 (2024) and remained strong at 55 (2025).** Ten nominees were recognised and provided with additional visibility support.

EIT Higher Education Initiative (EIT HEI)

Throughout the initiative, **62 unique Ukrainian organisations have participated as full partners and received funding in 35 different projects**. 42 of these were HEIs. The total funding allocated to Ukrainian partners during the Initiative's lifetime is close to €8.9 million.

EIT Girls Go Circular (rebranded to Girls GO STEM in 2026)

The programme has translated all learning materials into Ukrainian and delivered workshops in five Ukrainian cities since 2022, with training continuing since. **In 2025, 3,372 girls were trained by the programme**.

STORY OF IMPACT

Exploring critical minerals and energy (Estonia I Ukraine)

Beholder, an AI-driven remote sensing platform for critical mineral and energy exploration, secured €1 million in investment from InnoEnergy (with additional backing from Rockstart and STRT Ventures). The startup went on to win the €600,000 top prize at Latitude59 (2024), one of the largest startup competitions in the Baltic/Nordic region — beating 526 startups from 53 countries. In 2025, they won the Cleantech Capital Day pitching competition, securing €100,000 from Estonian accelerator Beamline and Lithuanian investment firm BSV Ventures. Beholder has developed an AI for the quick, precise and sustainable exploration of critical mineral deposits, enabling geological research to be upscaled. This state-of-the-art neural network combines 49 data inputs over 200 models to make efficient predictions of mineral deposits with an up to 96% accuracy rate. Mining companies receive access to geological insights with a pricing model based on the size of the project. Investors and banks receive risk clarification and an efficient assessment before a decision is made. Prices are based on project schedule and loan duration.



Andrii Sevriukov
CEO, Beholder

InnoEnergy capital injection significantly enhances our operational capabilities, positioning us to be central to the ongoing transformative efforts ensuring a steady supply of critical raw materials.

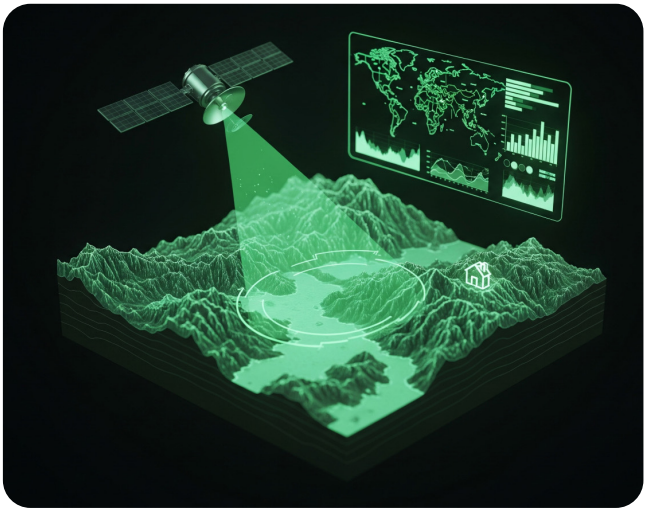


Figure 35. AI-driven remote sensing platform for critical mineral and energy exploration

Türkiye

The **EIT Community Hub Türkiye** was formally launched with an event on **12 February 2025 at METU (Middle East Technical University) in Ankara**, following its December 2024 announcement. It operates with a dual-city presence: Istanbul for its startup/investor ecosystem, Ankara for policy and academic ties and is run by a consortium of three organisations:







Figure 36. EIT Community Hub Türkiye inauguration – METU Ankara, 12 February 2025.

Türkiye's ecosystem is strong on STEM talent, but is held back by funding access, especially venture capital activity which is rising but still lacks an established ecosystems, and early-stage startups struggle to scale internationally. Thus, EIT focuses not only on capacity-building activities, but on increasing European investor participation in Turkish funding rounds as one of objectives of the hub's work. Türkiye's 2025 results show a country with clear strength in innovation output. The standout figure is innovations launched on the market, which number grew by 27% year on year, making 2025 Türkiye's strongest single year for innovation to date within the EIT RIS. In the period of 2021–2025 cumulative total of innovations launched on the market reached 31 (3.4% of the RIS region's total). Education participation also jumped by 120%, more than doubling year-on-year from 1,425 in 2024 to 3,140 in 2025, driven mainly by a strong rebound in non-labelled education participants. Investment attracted by the EIT-supported ventures from Türkiye held broadly steady, edging up from €3.39 million in 2024 to €3.52 million in 2025 (+4%), bringing the cumulative 2021–2025 total to €11.9 million.

STORY OF IMPACT

Logistics platform to lower costs and speed up delivery (Türkiye)

Co-founded by Tuba Yilmaz (Gözbaşı), Optiyol is a Turkish route-optimisation platform helping logistics, retail, and food and beverage companies cut costs and improve delivery performance. Compared to traditional planning methods, Optiyol reduces fuel costs by 15–25%, shrinks fleet size needs by 5–10%, and improves on-time delivery rates by 20–30% - results now proven across more than 300 distribution operations in multiple geographies. Optiyol's relationship with EIT Urban Mobility runs deep: €368,000 in total funding, participation in the Sustainable Logistics Accelerator (2022), and a pitch at the EIT Community Supernovas Investment Forum (2023). 2025 was the year that the investment paid off. Optiyol posted 40% growth, signing major new enterprise clients including IKEA, Danone Türkiye, and Gulf Coca-Cola, a signal that its technology works not just for niche logistics operators, but for some of the world's most demanding retail and FMCG supply chains. That commercial traction was independently validated: Optiyol swept six G2 Spring 2025 Awards, including Best Support, Easiest To Do Business With, and Momentum Leader, recognition based on real customer reviews, not self-reported claims. Building on 2024 revenue of €883,990, the company is now raising its Series A, with a clear focus on European market expansion.



Tuba Yilmaz Gözbaşı
Co-Founder & COO, Optiyol

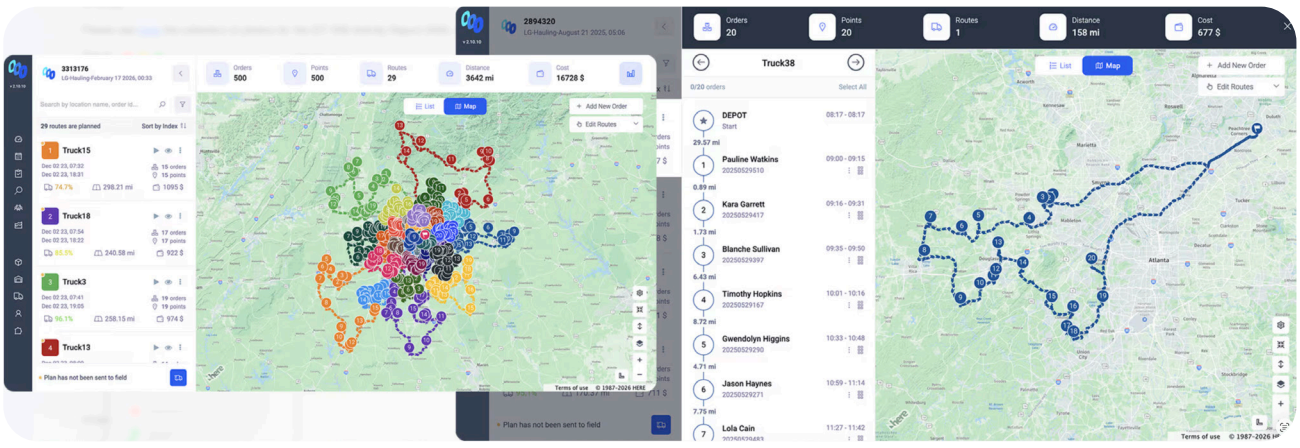


Figure 37. Optiyol solution supports automated route planning

6. Overview of the EIT Knowledge and Innovation Communities

2025 was a milestone year for Climate KIC, 28DIGITAL and InnoEnergy. After 15 years operating under a partnership agreement with the EIT, the relationship evolved to a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) framework. While the cooperation format changed, all knowledge triangle integration activities - spanning education, business creation, and innovation ecosystem management - were maintained.

These EIT Knowledge and Innovation Communities (EIT KICs) also rebranded during 2025, refreshing the overall look and feel of the brands, supporting their stronger market positioning. The rest of the EIT KICs continued developing their activities, whereas EIT Water – the newest EIT KIC – launched its first development phase on 11 November 2025. To facilitate EIT Water's establishment, the EIT will provide the KIC with a startup grant of up to €5 million during the launch phase in 2026, before it is expected to become fully operational in 2027.

6.1. 28DIGITAL

In 2025, 28DIGITAL placed emphasis on advancing digital innovation across EIT RIS countries by working closely with regional partners and embedding flagship programmes within RIS ecosystems. Summer Schools, SPIN, SpeedLauncher, Mentor Me, ClimaTech Connect, and Speed Master together created a coherent, multi--tiered support structure spanning education, entrepreneurship, and research commercialisation.
Four of the seven international Summer School editions were hosted in the EIT RIS countries, each aligned to regional strengths: Maritime Informatics & Robotics in Greece, Digital Wellbeing and Fintech in Spain, and Digital Transformation in Slovenia.



Figure 38. SpeedLauncher or Mentor Me programme

SpeedLauncher, a 12-week venture incubation and European co-creation accelerator designed to help early-stage deep-tech startups build MVPs, validate concepts, and prepare for seed investment, recorded the highest EIT RIS engagement rate of any 28DIGITAL programme: 46 of 57 participants (81%) came from EIT RIS countries. Both in Mentor Me programme, an intensive six-month mentoring journey pairing founders with experienced entrepreneurs and industry experts, and in Speed Master dedicated to founders looking to scale their ventures, approx. 60% of participants came from EIT RIS in 2025. Both programmes achieved close to gender parity across the cohorts. In SPIN, a hybrid entrepreneurial training and pre-incubation initiative of 28DIGITAL, researchers and scientists from EIT RIS countries dominated the cohort in its two tracks: REWIRE, a Health Tech & Wellbeing Commercialisation Lab, and Pitch the Science, focused on driving digital and circular innovation in manufacturing.

STORY OF IMPACT

Debt recovery is now automated (Romania)

QuickLegal is an AI-powered debt collection automation platform developed by a Romanian team led by CEO Iulia Andrițoiu Caizer and supported by 28DIGITAL. The platform reduces recovery time and operational costs by up to 30%, with recovery rates up to 40% on average and as high as 80% in individual client cases through data-driven decision-making and automated legal actions. Through 28DIGITAL 2024 Open Innovation Factory programme, QuickLegal refined its offering and attracted corporate partners, including selection for Vodafone Portugal's Open Innovation programme. In February 2025, €620,000 funding round opened, combining €360,000 from 28DIGITAL and Bravva Angels with a public crowdfunding campaign on SeedBlink. In April 2025 - Vodafone Open Innovation Program 2.0 was launched, where QuickLegal began working with Vodafone and its partners Capgemini and Ericsson to develop and optimize its debt-collection solution. The company won Women in Tech Startup of the Year at the 2026 Romania Startup Awards (ROTSA) and received a €75,000 Women TechEU grant, placing in the top 3.6% of the 1,107 applicants evaluated.



Figure 39. QuickLegal team led by CEO Iulia Andrițoiu Caizer

The biggest innovation ecosystem mapping in Greek history' (Greece)

In 2025, Found.ation, in collaboration with 28DIGITAL and the Hellenic Development Bank of Investments (HDBI), launched the most comprehensive mapping of Greece's innovation and startup ecosystem to date. For the first time, the 2025–2026 edition captured the broader innovation landscape beyond startups, unifying two previously separate flagship: Digital Transformation in Greece and Startups in Greece into a single report. The findings point to a maturing ecosystem: Greek startups attracted over €732 million across 95 funding rounds in 2025, a 35% year-on-year increase, with 143+ unique investors participating and early-stage (pre-seed/seed) deals accounting for 75% of activity.



Figure 40. Found.ation / HDBI report launch event

CLIMATECH CONNECT
Empowering climate startups with digital solutions

ClimaTech Connect is a joint training and mentoring programme, designed to accelerate early-stage European startups offering digital solutions for climate impact. Through expert-led workshops, tailored mentorship, and exclusive funding opportunities, EIT Community helped 100 entrepreneurs turn their ideas into scalable ventures.

The programme has been co-designed and co-delivered by 28DIGITAL and Climate KIC, which exemplifies the power of cross-KIC collaboration in accelerating Europe's climate-tech pipeline. In 2025, following a competitive Europe-wide call, 24 early-stage startups were selected, spanning clean energy, sustainable mobility, climate data, and circular economy solutions, with a deliberate focus on attracting women-led founders and teams from countries with lower innovation scores.

After two months of entrepreneurial training and mentoring from experts across both climate and digital innovation, ten finalists advanced to a live Demo Day in Valencia on 8 October, pitching investors, corporates, and public stakeholders.



Figure 41. Demo Day in Valencia – 8 October 2025

GreenPow (Estonia)
which uses AI-driven load-shifting to cut the carbon cost of cloud computing for data centres;

ASTRO kW (Spain)
which applies AI to help organisations from agriculture to real estate optimise energy consumption;

Jälle Technologies (Estonia)
which upcycles graphite waste from battery recycling into graphene-like materials for a circular battery economy;

Latitudo 40 (Italy)
which uses satellite image analysis to help urban planners and governments track coastal erosion, tree coverage, and urban heat.



Erki Ani
CEO of Jälle Technologies (Estonia)

The most valuable aspect from ClimaTech Connect has been the very high-quality workshops on different topics that you can't find in other accelerator programmes - ones that are more focused on the climate, on responsibility, on diversity.

6.2. Climate KIC

EIT RIS regions played a strategic role in Climate KIC's place-based transformation activities. In 2025, Climate KIC intentionally intensified collaboration with EIT Community Hubs and EIT Community Officers to avoid duplication and better leverage existing actors in local innovation ecosystems. Climate KIC focused on refining its service portfolio, stimulating market demand, and advancing excellence across more mature RIS regions, strengthening the capabilities of challenge owners and ensuring a stable, high-quality innovation pipeline.



Figure 42. Climate KIC RIS programme participants

Impactful Climate KIC programmes:

- **The Climate KIC Academy**, awarded the EIT non-degree Education Label in 2025, delivered programmes to 715 RIS graduates and launched a dedicated ESO (Entrepreneurship Support Organisation) programme for EIT RIS-based organisations to build their capacity to support climate innovation ventures.
- **The Green Horizons Farmers Network**, piloted in five EIT RIS regions across Greece (Megara and Nemea), Spain (Valencia and Malaga), and Poland (Czestochowa), in 2025 supported 180 farmers in overcoming barriers to climate adaptation.
- **The ClimAccelerator**, Climate KIC's global accelerator for early-stage climate startups, operated six regional editions in RIS territories in 2025, which collectively supported 54 EIT RIS startups, with the portfolio attracting €202.7 million in investment - **by far the largest capital mobilisation in the 2025 EIT RIS portfolio** and a powerful demonstration of the commercial potential of climate innovation in widening regions.

- Blue Economy Malta
- Clean Cities Spain
- Agri ClimAccelerator Türkiye
- Rural ClimAccelerator Iberian
- Circular ClimAccelerator North Macedonia
- Romania ClimAccelerator

Climate KIC also played a key role in business development by providing systems innovation expertise, facilitating participatory and co-creation processes, and hosting Collaboration Laboratories (CoLabs), place-based climate innovation and action events, in Ljubljana, Cagliari, Barcelona, and Warsaw as part of the Climate KIC Community.



Our place-based approach exists precisely because transformation doesn't only happen where the spotlight already is. RIS regions are too often written off as peripheral, but for us, especially in 2025, the RIS shows exactly the opposite: the next great climate exit can come from anywhere, if the right support meets the right place at the right time.

Morten Sørensen
Strategic Programmes Orchestrator, Climate KIC

STORY OF IMPACT

From Data to Decarbonisation: Climate Intelligence for the Built Environment (Cyprus)

2050 Materials, founded in Limassol, Cyprus, in 2021 set out to tackle one of the built environment's biggest barriers to decarbonisation: fragmented, inaccessible climate data buried in PDFs and product sheets. The startup built a platform that turns complex environmental reports and construction product data into searchable, comparable insights for architects, engineers, manufacturers, and investors, enabling low-carbon decision-making across the construction value chain. After joining Climate KIC's Circular Cities ClimAccelerator in 2022, 2050 Materials scaled with Climate KIC's mentoring, network access, and early-stage support, alongside public and private funding including a €500,000 grant from Cyprus's Research & Innovation Foundation. The platform later proved its commercial traction through a 2024 integration with RIB Software's CostX solution, embedding sustainability data directly into construction cost estimation. In November 2025, 2050 Materials was acquired by the Once For All Group, Europe's leading supply-chain management platform for construction, marking **Climate KIC's first portfolio exit** and a landmark outcome for a RIS-origin climate startup. The platform continues to operate as a standalone entity within Once For All, now scaling its climate-data infrastructure across a far larger European supply-chain network - proof that regionally-rooted climate-tech ventures can graduate from acceleration support to real industry-wide impact.



Figure 43. 2050 Materials-produced climate intelligence reports

Satellite Data, Blockchain Trust, and a Cleaner Black Sea (Romania)

Learn more:

A startup Recycllux tackles Black Sea plastic pollution by pairing satellite detection with community-executed cleanups. Its proprietary AI models analyse satellite data to detect floating plastic accumulation zones with far greater precision than traditional monitoring, then trigger interventions on its platform: local fishing vessels collect the waste, NGOs handle sorting, and recycling partners process the material - the entire chain logged on blockchain for verifiable, auditable impact, and monetised through a B2B model charging companies a 5–10% transaction fee per intervention to fund plastic-neutral and EPR/CSR compliance. Recycllux scaled through Climate KIC's Black Sea ClimAccelerator, gaining mentoring, ecosystem connections, and continued backing as a Climate SAFE portfolio company. 2025 was a year of validation and funding momentum: a $125,000 grant from Social Tides & Google.org in February funded its migration to Google Cloud and a new impact-reporting dashboard, additional non-dilutive support followed from Google for Startups and EIC InnoNext, and the company used a further €100,000 raise to execute its first real-world Black Sea pilot cleanup. That groundwork culminated in November, when Recycllux won the Women TechEU 4th and final Open Call, selected from a record 1,107 applications. With its pilot validated, Recycllux is now moving toward recurring commercial deployments and expansion from the Black Sea into the Mediterranean.

6.3. EIT Culture and Creativity

In 2025 EIT Culture & Creativity welcomed 18 new EIT RIS partner organisations, representing 45% of all partners onboarded during the year. Throughout 2025, this played out on the ground across the EIT RIS map - from joining sTARTUp Day in Tartu, Estonia, in January, to hosting an Innovation in Cultural Heritage' conference in Rome in April, alongside participating in Startup Safari Budapest, Hungary. Two milestones bookended the plan's close: the flagship „Beyond Competitiveness" Annual Partner Conference in Porto (5-7 November 2025), drawing 150 participants from policy, cities, ventures, and cultural institutions, and the opening of a new Malta office in partnership with Xjenza Malta (1 December), extending EIT Culture and Creativity presence across the Mediterranean.



Silvio Scerri
CEO at Xjenza Malta

We look forward to contributing to the operation of the EIT Culture & Creativity space in Malta. Its presence will reinforce not just the EIT's footprint in Malta, but it will also enhance our diverse portfolio of support services to the wider cultural and creative industry sectors.
This is a vibrant industry with considerable potential to tap into R&I funding opportunities and scale up across the EU market.







Figure 44. Beyond Competitiveness' Annual Partner Conference in Porto organised by EIT Culture and Creativity. Photo by Andre Henriques.



Figure 45. Rome „Innovation in Cultural Heritage" conference



Figure 46. Inauguration of the EIT Culture and Creativity Office in Malta, 1 December 2025

5,683

citizens trained in non-degree innovation and entrepreneurship education (2025)

In 2025, EIT Culture and Creativity trained 456 graduates through EIT-labelled and 1,411 professionals in non-labelled courses, including a high level of participation from EIT RIS countries with 341 labelled graduates and 1,237 non-labelled participants from EIT RIS countries.

Through the EIT Community's Higher Education Initiative (EIT HEI), EIT Culture and Creativity managed six projects that engaged 3,779 successful participants, supported 53 startups, and established 70 new partnerships.

Additionally, under the EIT Community Girls Go STEM (GGS) initiative, the EIT Culture and Creativity contributed to the training of 18,834 girls through modules on circular thinking in video games and fashion circularity. In the field of acceleration, of the 16 startups projects selected for EIT Culture & Creativity's Spark Incubation Programme 2025, six came from EIT RIS-eligible countries, spanning both tracks – architecture and cultural heritage:



CircularLink (Portugal)

Connects architects and builders with suppliers of reclaimed, surplus, and biobased materials.



GeoSolvo (Italy)

Patented AI-powered Smart Tripod automates high-precision surveying.



Marenium (Malta)

Modular floating houses for coastal living.



NERA Eco Con-struction (Spain)

3D-prints circular facade panels from sawdust waste.



WeavAir/InLine (Poland)

AI-powered digital twins. Reducing energy consumption.



Moodish (Romania)

Turns cafés and heritage sites into immersive, AR-powered "story capsules".

The full EIT KICs Education Guide 2025 is available online.

STORY OF IMPACT

Turning Storytellers into a Creative Economy (Türkiye)

Kami, founded by Yağmur Aydemir, is Türkiye's largest digital storytelling and webcomic platform, connecting creators and readers through interactive visual narratives across webcomics and next-generation formats. Supported through EIT Culture & Creativity's Shape Acceleration Programme in 2025, Kami scaled to 1.6 million users generating over 400 million monthly engagement minutes, monetising through in-app tokens, advertising, and subscriptions, while expanding beyond its Turkish base with over 150,000 international installs as it prepares for global rollout.

The platform's momentum earned it a place on EIT Culture & Creativity's „100-to-Watch" list of Europe's most promising cultural and creative ventures, while founder Yağmur Aydemir was separately named to the Forbes 30 Under 30 Europe list.

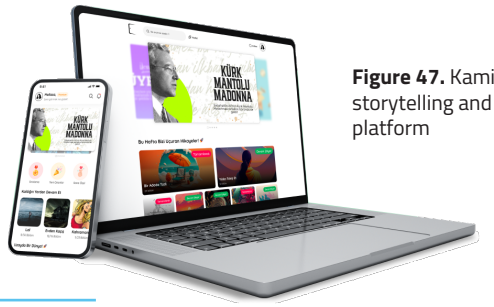


Figure 47. Kami - digital storytelling and webcomic platform

6.4. EIT Food

In 2025, EIT Food delivered a broad portfolio of instruments supporting citizens and entrepreneurs across RIS countries, anchored by an on-the-ground presence through two Co-Location Centres: CLC North-East in Warsaw, Poland, and CLC South in Madrid, Spain, alongside a network of EIT Food Country Representatives in 15 countries. During 2025, its RIS portfolio spanned the full innovation pipeline: early-stage matchmaking through TeamUp, real-world validation via Test Farms, and market-entry support through Sales Booster, alongside dedicated tracks such as Empowering Women in Agrifood (EWA), the Corporate Venturing Launchpad, the Agrifood Investment Launchpad, RIS Fellowships, professional development courses, summer schools, Consumer Engagement Labs, and Food Educators with RIS learners prioritised for the Biotechnology and Resilient Agriculture Academies.

10,355
participants engaged

103
startups and scaleups supported

62%
women

Collectively, in 2025 these **85 country-level activities** engaged **10,355 participants** - **62%** of them **women** and supported **103 startups and scaleups**.

10
innovative food products

The Consumer Engagement Labs (CEL) alone co-created **10 innovative food products** that **surpassed €10,000 in sales** during the year.

€10,000
in sales

3,397
EIT-labelled graduates

Over **3,397 EIT-labelled graduates** completed high-quality, sector-specific education programmes in 2025.

In 2025 EIT Food continued to support policy dialogues for Europe's Food Systems. For instance, on 26 May 2025 in Warsaw, EIT Food convened the high-level Roundtable "The Future of Europe's Food Systems: Leveraging Innovation for Strategic Resilience and Competitiveness," held under the Official Patronage of the Polish Presidency of the Council of the EU.

The event engaged 100 participants including the Polish Minister of Science and Higher Education, senior officials from the Ministries of Agriculture and Science, and representatives from the Good Food Institute Europe and the EIT Food startup ecosystem. The event generated a unified call for "political, financial, and technological action" on food systems, directly linking RIS-based innovation to EU legislative priorities.



Milda Kraužlis
Head of Value Delivery Projects, EIT Food

Innovation doesn't only happen in Europe's biggest capitals - some of our most resilient, resourceful entrepreneurs are working in RIS countries, often with less access to capital and networks than their peers elsewhere. That's exactly why RIS isn't a side programme for us; it is core to how EIT Food builds a food system that works for the whole of Europe.

Learn more:



Figure 48. EIT Food Roundtable "The Future of Europe's Food Systems: Leveraging Innovation for Strategic Resilience and Competitiveness", 26 May 2025, Warsaw, Poland.

STORY OF IMPACT

€10,000 and Counting: How Consumer-Led Products Reach the Shelf

EIT Food's Consumer Engagement Labs (CEL) is one of Europe's largest food co-creation initiatives. In 2025, the CEL methodology produced 10 innovative products that surpassed €10,000 in market sales, contributing to 18 marketed innovations across the full 2023–2025 cycle. The 2025 cohort included healthy plant-based snacks, functional lactose-free yoghurts, healthy functional gummies, and sustainable ready-to-eat meals. A total of 257 participants were directly involved in co-creation workshops across Greece, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, and Serbia, including consumers, scientists, and food company experts.



Figure 49. Workshops across Greece, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia

A tested model for Inclusive Agrifood Entrepreneurship

In 2025, EIT Food successfully expanded the social innovation activities in RIS Countries (AMPLE Programme) through the implementation of five locally led projects across RIS and Horizon Europe associated countries. Building on the AMPLE pilot previously implemented in Madrid and Warsaw with Citi Foundation funding, the initiative supported the replication and adaptation of the AMPLE model in diverse urban contexts, addressing the food security, inclusion and local entrepreneurship needs of underrepresented communities. The AMPLE Programme was implemented in Lutsk, Skopje, Olsztyn, Velika Plana and Split. Each project adapted the AMPLE model to local needs, combining Community, Learning and Business to support vulnerable communities through food skills, entrepreneurship and employment pathways. Together, the projects engaged 225 participants and delivered 135 activities.

Learn more:

- **Ample Lutsk (Ukraine):** 52 participants, 42 activities; food prototypes and business ideas developed.
- **Ample Skopje (North Macedonia):** 48 participants, 18 activities, 12 business ideas developed and pitched; AMPLE foundation launched.
- **Ample Olsztyn (Poland):** 70 participants, 32 activities; early-stage business ideas developed; Urban Community Garden established.
- **Ample Velika Plana (Serbia):** 20 participants, 40 activities; 3 pilot food products developed.
- **Ample Split (Croatia):** 35 participants, 3 activity streams; 5 work trials completed; pilot food products developed; long-term initiative continued under SKMER.

6.5. EIT Health

In 2025, EIT Health continued to deliver a broad portfolio of programmes dedicated to strengthening the healthcare innovation landscape across its RIS regions. Central to this was InnoStars Connect, EIT Health's open-innovation matchmaking programme pairing RIS-region startups, hospitals, and researchers with industry challenge owners. In its 2025 edition, InnoStars Connect worked with Chiesi Group on two neonatal-care challenges: early diagnosis of respiratory distress and support for preterm infants and their families and with ULS de Coimbra (Portugal) on smart hospital scheduling, selecting 10 teams for €10,000 in funding, mentoring, and bootcamps running from March through December 2025.

Education and talent development remained a cornerstone of EIT Health's RIS activity. Through Women InnoVenture (a multi-week entrepreneurship programme for early-stage women founders and researchers in HealthTech), HelloAI RIS (practical AI education for RIS-region students and professionals), i-Days hackathons hosted at universities across RIS countries, and hub capacity-building activities, EIT Health supported 1,276 participants in building entrepreneurial and innovation skills essential to transforming healthcare.

EIT Health's network of EIT Health Country Representatives, spanned 11 countries and acted as regional „change agencies" for healthcare entrepreneurs, playing a supportive role in ecosystem building and community engagement throughout the year. Eight locally driven capacity-building projects, led by these Representatives in partnership with regional stakeholders, addressed pressing healthcare and innovation challenges while leveraging over €80,000 in external funding. The long-running Morning Health Talks series, held across RIS regions from Latvia to Portugal and Poland, hosted 28 events in 2025 and engaged over 1,000 healthcare professionals, innovators, policymakers, academics, and investors.

Example of the EIT Health Morning Health Talks event, which took place in Prague, Czechia, in 2025.
The event was organised in partnership with DEX Innovation Centre.



> Some of the most urgent challenges we face - ageing populations, chronic disease, workforce shortages - are felt hardest in regions that RIS was built to support. EIT RIS is central to how we close the gap between where healthcare innovation is invented and where it's needed most. When a startup in Vilnius solves a health-data problem, or a hospital in Coimbra co-develops a neonatal care solution, that's not just a regional win - it's a blueprint the rest of Europe can use.
>
> **Céline Carrera**
> Interim CEO and Director of Programmes & Delivery, EIT Health

STORY OF IMPACT

The secondary use of health data framework, developed in Lithuania and ready to scale across Europe

Initiated from discussions at EIT Health's Morning Health Talks series, the Lithuanian Health Data Pilot, launched in February 2024, established a working framework for the secondary use of health data by startups: from initial data request through secure transfer, integration, and use for innovation. Led by the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences (LSMU), EIT Health's Country Representative in Lithuania, the pilot brought together LSMU Kaunas Klinikos, LSMU Kaunas Hospital, Vilnius University Santaros Klinikos Biobank, the State Data Agency, the Innovation Agency, law firm Ellex, and venture fund BSV Ventures, attracting 10 early-stage startups in its first round. In September 2025, the project's results were consolidated into Lithuania's first white paper on the topic, „Providing secondary use of health data to early-stage startups". Crucially, the initiative secured backing from Lithuania's Ministry of Economy and Innovation and Ministry of Health, elevating it from a regional pilot into a national-level policy effort, a best-practice model, born in the EIT RIS country, that other European regions can now replicate.



Inga Kanapeckienė
lead of the Lithuania Health Data Pilot

Lithuania is showing how a small, agile country can lead Europe in responsible health data innovation.

Cognitive Companion for Seniors combats isolation (Romania)

Eldie is an AI-powered virtual companion for seniors, developed in Romania, combining scientifically validated cognitive activities, wellbeing tracking, and personalised recommendations to combat isolation and support proactive cognitive health management. Social isolation is linked to faster cognitive decline, a significantly higher risk of dementia, depression and anxiety, higher rates of cardiovascular disease, and weakened immune function. That is why strengthening support for innovators tackling this challenge was crucial to EIT Health. In 2025, the platform's impact was recognised with the World Summit Award for



Teofil Sturzoiu
CEO & Co-founder, Eldie

Our mission remains the same: to support slowing cognitive decline and provide caregivers with early and valuable information about their loved ones' health status.

European Young Innovators The EIT Health ecosystem provided mentorship, network access, and validation that accelerated their €300,000 fundraising round. The company has secured backing from organizations such as Future Makers Digital Incubator and Johnson & Johnson Innovative Medicine. By the end of 2025, 800+ seniors and caregivers benefited from Eldie's daily support. The EIT Health Network facilitated international demos in the UK and France in 2025, while connections through the EIT Health Representative led to strategic partnerships in Romania (Asociația Niciodată Singur, Affinity Life Care, Alphega Farmacie).

Transforming Cardiac Care (Spain)

Corify Care developed ACORYS®, an advanced non-invasive cardiac mapping system utilising 128 body surface sensors to generate detailed electroanatomical maps of the heart in under 10 minutes, without CT or MRI scans. The startup participated in the EIT Health Attract to Invest (2022), and obtained funding from the EIT with the SAVE-COR project with over €2.5 million, enabling pivotal clinical trials involving more than 1,000 patients across Spain and Portugal. It was instrumental in obtaining CE Mark certification under MDR in July 2024. In December 2024, Corify Care secured €6 million in additional funding (€3 million private investment led by Clave-Mondragón plus €3 million public grants).
This facilitated ACORYS® expansion across Europe and US market entry. In May 2025, Corify Care announced a know-how agreement with Mayo Clinic to improve AI-powered cardiac arrhythmia care.



Andreu Climent
Co-founder and CEO,
Corify Care

The CE marking is a significant milestone for us. It validates our commitment to providing innovative and non-invasive solutions for cardiac arrhythmias.

6.6. InnoEnergy

In InnoEnergy's RIS activities in 2025 education and skills remained a core pillar. The InnoEnergy Masters+ programme continued to combine technical expertise with innovation and entrepreneurship training (160+ students annually; 2,000+ graduates since launch), supporting a talent pipeline including RIS country participants. The InnoEnergy Skills Institute scaled workforce upskilling and reskilling through infrastructure covering **145+ job roles**, **600+ hours of content**, **10+ languages**, and **29+ certificates**. InnoEnergy portfolio companies achieved landmark milestones in 2025 that directly strengthen Europe's clean energy and digital infrastructure. For example, Skeleton Technologies (Estonia), opened its SuperBattery factory in Varkaus, Finland (€50 million in investment, 1 GW annual capacity, 65+ employees growing to 200+ by 2029), and its Leipzig SuperFactory in Germany (420 high-skilled jobs, graphene super-capacitors reducing AI data centre electricity consum-ption by up to 44%). ElevenEs (Serbia) launched the Edge574 Blade Cell LFP battery (10%–80% charge in 12 minutes, 500,000 km lifespan, 190 Wh/kg energy density).

STORY OF IMPACT

AI system cuts street lighting costs by 80% (Poland)

Gradis signed a strategic agreement with energy group TAURON in 2025 to develop an advanced AI-based system for managing over 700,000 street lighting points, with potential to scale across Poland's 3.3 million fixtures. The InnoEnergy-supported company's solution combines AI-driven optimisation models, graph grammar-based algorithms, and self-learning mechanisms to enable up to 97% faster photometric conversions and up to 81% improvement in energy efficiency, delivering energy savings of up to 80% and significantly reducing public spending and CO_2 emissions. The technology has already been implemented in major cities including Kraków, Wrocław, and Tbilisi.



Andrzej Serwicki
Investment Director, InnoEnergy

This project demonstrates the growing role of Central and Eastern Europe in delivering high-impact clean-tech and digital solutions and illustrates how InnoEnergy's investment in RIS-origin companies can lead to nationally significant infrastructure transformation contracts, directly contributing to Europe's climate, energy efficiency, and smart city goals.



Leszek Kotulski
Founder, Gradis

About 20% of the energy generated worldwide is consumed by lighting systems. In Poland, most units and systems are outdated. We know how complicated the process of modernizing and managing lighting infrastructure is. That is why we are excited to co-create the concept of an advanced IT system that will combine and optimize many processes. This will result in investment savings and the reduction of energy consumption by up to 80%.

25% energy savings system, trusted by global companies across borders (Hungary)

HeatVentors Kft., founded in Hungary in 2017 closed a €4.032 million Series A funding round in 2025, led by a consortium including Hungary's Blue Planet Venture Capital Fund, InnoEnergy, and Germany's Impulsus Clean Technologies GmbH. The company's Intelligent Thermal Batteries deliver up to 25% energy savings in heating and cooling systems, enabling renewable energy storage, waste heat recovery, and reliable HVAC operations. By 2025, the technology had already been deployed in seven countries, including Hungary, Germany, Oman, and Portugal, with nearly 80 storage units installed, trusted by customers spanning global energy companies, industrial manufacturers, office buildings, data centres, and hotels.



József Kakas
CEO

Energy storage has become recognized across virtually all major markets as an indispensable enabler of decarbonization... this investment fortifies our technological capabilities for international scaleup.

6.7. EIT Manufacturing

EIT Manufacturing's RIS activities in 2025 were implemented under two streams: "Engage local players in KIC activities" and "Foster collaborations, mobilise, interlink and internationalise national/regional networks and ecosystems." Seven call activities selected through the 2025 Call for Proposals were implemented by EIT Manufacturing partners across RIS countries. Among non-call activities, RIS Inclusiveness supported five RIS teams in developing innovative solutions to increase workforce inclusion of people with disabilities in manufacturing shopfloors, leading to 2 market innovations exceeding €10,000 in revenue in 2025. Evolutions of RIS Innovations (EVO-R) selected 25 RIS teams to bring validated prototypes to market, resulting in 5 marketed innovations surpassing €10,000 in revenue. Eleven EIT Manufacturing RIS Hubs continued operations in 2025, complemented by active EIT Manufacturing Co-Location Centres engaging local ecosystem actors.

STORY OF IMPACT

Eliminating human errors in manufacturing facilities

A startup Neuron AI built OPTIPLANT4ALL - a smart digital assistant that helps factory workers know when a machine is about to break down, in whatever way works best for them. Some workers get simple voice instructions, others see easy step-by-step visuals, and the system keeps learning and adjusting to each person's needs over time. It was developed with funding and coaching from EIT Manufacturing's RIS Inclusiveness programme in 2025, specifically to make advanced factory technology usable by workers with disabilities. Through the programme, the startup received €40,000 and as a result completed real-world pilot testing in manufacturing environments. The real breakthrough came from an unexpected place. One feature - clear, spoken instructions given during a machine emergency was originally designed for workers with cognitive disabilities. But when tested on the factory floor, it turned out to help everyone by reducing errors and managing work stress for the whole team, not just the workers it was built for.

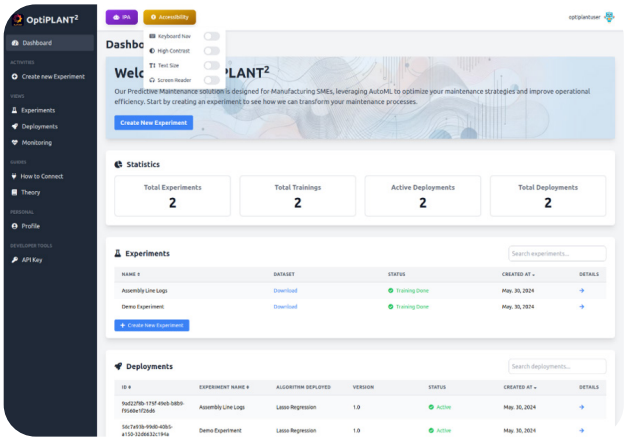


Figure 50. OPTIPLANT4ALL dashboard

6.8. EIT RawMaterials

In 2025 EIT RawMaterials deployed RIS activities across 19 EIT RIS countries. The share of EIT RawMaterials partners from RIS countries reached 55% of all members, up from 2024, with 26 additional EIT RIS partners joining. The impact assessment confirmed significant progress in the share of participants, innovations, and collaborations coming from EIT RIS. As shown below, EIT RIS accounted for:

Twelve new startups were established by EIT-labelled EIT RIS students and graduates in 2025, with several achieving sales or investment exceeding **€200,000**. A total of **120 students from RIS countries** graduated from EIT-labelled programmes.

Marketed innovations
over 70% of EIT RawMaterials' total 2025 results

Graduates from EIT-labelled programmes: 39%

New startups established: 33%

Startup/scaleup support: over 55%

External Investment attracted by supported ventures: 31%



The 2025 Call for RIS Innovation Projects offered €800,000–€1 million per project for consortia spanning at least two RIS-eligible countries, covering exploration, sustainable mining, processing, circularity, recycling, and substitution. We selected cutting-edge solutions coming from EIT RIS countries, which have a significant potential to support Europe's competitiveness.

Tina Benda
RIS Manager, EIT RawMaterials

STORY OF IMPACT

Electric Mining Equipment Reaching Commercial Market (Croatia)

The NRE-ElectRA, coordinated by a female lead, delivered one of the most commercially successful innovation results in the 2025 EIT RawMaterials RIS portfolio. The project developed and commercialised innovative, electric-powered, remote-controlled equipment for the mechanised extraction of strategic metals from ultra-low mining profiles (0.9–1.7 metres) - a segment previously unserved by any automated solution. In 2025, five industrial designs covering the complete NRE fleet (NRE Dozer, NRE Drill Rig, NRE Support Rig, Prime Mover) and the XLP Groundhog dozer were submitted, with international protection secured in Canada, China, the EU, Norway, Ukraine, and the United States. Four innovations were successfully launched on the market, with total revenue of €1.89M achieved in 2025. The project created or maintained 20 full-time industrial and R&D jobs, and operational deployment of one NRE fleet in platinum reef mining resulted in approximately 13% energy savings and reduced CO_2 emissions compared to conventional low-profile mining methods. Seven BSc, MSc, and PhD students were directly involved in related research, and 152,000 persons were reached through public engagement at the Nikola Tesla Museum in Zagreb.



Figure 51. Practical usage of the NRE fleet for thin, inclined, sub-horizontal ore bodies. December 2025

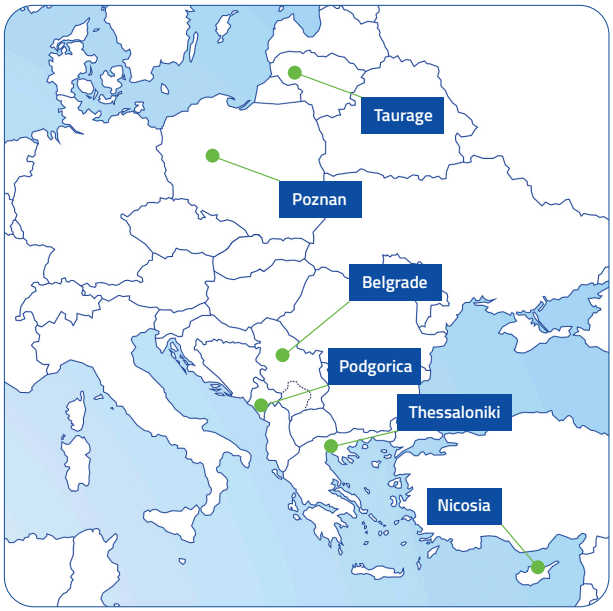
6.9. EIT Urban Mobility

EIT Urban Mobility's RIS portfolio delivered strong, integrated results across Education, Innovation, Impact Ventures, and Ecosystem in 2025, engaging 1,951 participants (48% female) through 40 country-level activities across 16 RIS countries and territories, spanning entrepreneurship education, open innovation, startup investment, and regional ecosystem building. In Education, the RIS Education Open Call (launched May 2024) delivered 15 projects across 2025, including AIM4Mobility, a pioneering programme to reskill the workforce in urban planning, transportation, and data science with ethical AI and ML skills to tackle urban mobility challenges. Demand only grew from there: the follow-on RIS Education Open Call 2026 (launched June 2025) selected 16 projects from over 20 countries, including first-time initiatives in Albania, Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

„From Pilot to Product: How RAPTOR Lit Up Six RIS Cities"

In Innovation, six of the 13 RAPTOR 2025 city challenges were hosted in EIT RIS cities.

One of the standout results of 2025 RAPTOR was a **project SAFELIGHT**, an AI-powered **„Autonomous Urban Inspector for Lighting"** developed by Flash Lighting Services (Romania). The solution enables automatic evaluation of night visibility in the streets to detect unsafe or hazardous situations and keep the safest possible roads. The cities participating in SAFELIGHT have conducted a nighttime visibility analysis of their streets and roads, with particular emphasis on the impact on areas frequented by vulnerable road users. As a result of this analysis, Las Rozas and Brasov have made modifications to the lighting in certain locations. ASIMOB has developed a new service, based on the Autonomous Urban Inspector, which allows the evaluation of the degree of visibility on streets and roads, in any city in the world, in a simple and automatic way.



In Impact Ventures, the programme closed seven investment deals totalling **€1.9 million**, **helping RIS-supported startups attract €16.83 million**, more than three times the original target, while **supporting 129 startups** in total.

In Ecosystem, the network of **11 EIT Urban Mobility RIS Country Representatives** drove partnership growth directly: **36 leads generated 6 new organic partnerships**, and the network's support contributed to the creation of **16 new startups**.



People sometimes ask what RIS countries get out of this programme. I'd rather ask what Europe would be missing without them. A safer street in Brașov taught us something we're now applying elsewhere. It's how a genuinely European innovation network is supposed to work - every region both learns and teaches.

Lluis Puerto
RIS and EIT Community Director, EIT Urban Mobility

STORY OF IMPACT

Building Romania's First Mobility Innovation Corridor (Romania)

inVest is an EIT Urban Mobility accelerator for West Romania, co-financed by the regional development agency ADR Vest and implemented by Iceberg Plus and Cowork Timișoara. Running from July to October 2025, it aimed to position Romania's West Region as a hub for urban innovation. It responded both to a national innovation gap, with Romania's performance on venture capital expenditure at just 12.6% of the EU average according to the 2025 European Innovation Scoreboard, and to the structural economic challenges facing former mining communities in the region. The 2025 phase focused on ecosystem building and early-stage acceleration: from over 50 European applicants, 14 teams were selected, including BraveX Aero, a fixed-wing and VTOL drones for long-distance monitoring, surveillance, and search & rescue or CautCurier (UrbanFlow), AI-powered same-day urban delivery platform, A Stage 2 call, offering up to €200,000 per startup to move from pilot to real implementation, is already open for 2026. inVest's real significance lies in what it's building toward. ADR Vest has since launched two venture capital vehicles to carry graduates forward: Vest Ventures (€16.6 million, launched February 2026) and the larger Asternova Vest (€37 million target, managed with France's Aster Capital Partners). Strikingly, Iceberg Plus, EIT Community Hub Romania and inVest's implementing partner co-manages both funds, creating a single, continuous capital pathway from accelerator grant through seed and growth-stage venture capital, all anchored in Timișoara. inVest thus demonstrates how EIT Urban Mobility RIS investment can catalyse not just individual startups, but a lasting, institutionalised regional innovation infrastructure.



Figure 52. inVest event, Timisoara 2025

STORY OF IMPACT

Mobility is a human right - AI Glasses That Give Independence Back to the Visually Impaired (Romania)

In December 2025, EIT Urban Mobility invested €500,000 for a 1.53% stake in .lumen (dotLumen), a deep-tech startup based in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, that has built the world's first AI-powered navigation glasses for the visually impaired. The investment, announced under the headline "Europe bets on .lumen," reflects EIT Urban Mobility's core belief that the cities of the future must work for everyone and that mobility, for the 338 million people worldwide living with visual impairment, is still one of the most basic freedoms denied by inadequate technology. .lumen's technology, Pedestrian Autonomous Driving (PAD AI), replicates the function of a guide dog using artificial intelligence, computer vision, and haptic feedback, building a real-time 3D map of a user's surroundings and guiding them through it via subtle physical cues, rather than sound. It's the world's first wearable capable of pedestrian navigation powered by autonomous-driving technology, already tested by over 300 users across nearly 30 countries. In September 2025, Commission President Ursula von der Leyen showcased .lumen in her State of the Union address, calling it "a European innovation that changes lives." Across 2025, .lumen



also raised capital from Catalyst Romania, SeedBlink, the European Innovation Council Fund, Sweden's Tigrim, and VR HealthTech and collected an unusually high-profile group of backers along the way, including former international footballer Răzvan Raț, Formula E champion Lucas di Grassi, and a member of the ruling family of Ras Al Khaimah. To date, the company has attracted roughly €25 million in total plus a separate €11 million non-reimbursable grant to extend its PAD AI technology into autonomous delivery robots for cities. The startup was earlier supported by EIT Health.



Figure 53. Cornel Amariei, CEO and founder of .lumen



7. EIT Community Strategic Regional Innovations Cluster

The EIT Community Strategic Regional Innovations Cluster was a multi-annual (2023–2025) horizontal project funded by EIT and coordinated by EIT Health, which concluded in December 2025. The Cluster brought together all EIT Knowledge and Innovation Communities under a single, coordinated mission: to close Europe's innovation divide by collaboration and synergistic activities. Its geographic focus covered the EIT Regional Innovation Scheme (RIS) area.

The model of the EIT Community Cluster was based on operating within a single shared structure to optimise, enhance, and multiply EIT KICs collective impact across the RIS region. The Cluster delivered this mission through four complementary pillars, each targeting a different stage of the innovation pipeline, from infrastructure to acceleration and on-the-ground presence:

28 DGTL

INNO

Climate KIC

eit Culture & Creativity

eit Food

eit Health

eit Manufacturing

eit RawMaterials

eit UrbanMobility

EIT Jumpstarter
EIT's pan-European pre-accelerator, converting science-based ideas into start-ups with validated, investment-ready business models.

EIT InfraBooster (Western Balkans, Moldova, Ukraine and neighbouring countries) turning existing, publicly funded research infrastructure into viable commercial services, backed by capacity-building and awareness-raising.

Rebuild Ukraine
a dedicated support package combining founder-level support (EIT Founders2Founders) with targeted backing for female innovators (EIT Red Kalyna).

EIT Community Hubs
a network of one-stop-shop giving every local ecosystem in the EIT RIS-eligible area a single point of access to the full EIT Community offer.

EIT Jumpstarter

+50%

applications YoY

2025 results

EIT InfraBooster

9

services to the market in 2025

Rebuild Ukraine

76

startups supported in 2025

EIT Community Hubs

6 → 24

Jul 2024 to Dec 2025

2025 was the year this architecture scaled. The Cluster strengthened its reach in the EU Outermost Regions and the Mediterranean, while the Hub network nearly quadrupled and flagship programmes posted their strongest results to date. Combining sector expertise within shared EIT RIS engagement structures produced additional impact, stronger venture outcomes, and more complete support for founders.

Márton Herczeg
Head of the Innovation Ecosystem Unit at the European Institute of Innovation and Technology

EIT Jumpstarter: from applications to real ventures scaling internationally

Demand for EIT Jumpstarter surged in 2025, with applications up roughly 50% year-on-year, drawn from every eligible country and territory, including the Spanish, Portuguese and French Outermost Regions, Moldova, Ukraine, Türkiye, and the Western Balkans. The programme backed this growth with more than €130,000 in cash prizes plus in-kind mentoring and networking support for newly created ventures. A new alumni track, initiated in 2024, the EIT Jumpstarter Next extended support to 10 additional startups, who went on to gain international recognition at the EIT Innovation Awards.





Figure 54. EIT Jumpstarter Grand Final 2025, Budapest, Hungary

STORY OF IMPACT

Cancer Science for Madeira

From a small lab on the remote Atlantic island of Madeira, MYLeukaemia is proving that groundbreaking cancer science doesn't need to come from Europe's usual innovation hubs. The startup has built an organ-on-chip „bone-marrow avatar" that tests a blood cancer patient's own cells against a panel of approved therapies, delivering a ranked, evidence-based treatment recommendation to doctors within – as per declaration of the startup -72 hours. The startup aims to replace today's trial-and-error approach to chemotherapy selection with a faster, more personalised alternative. Having previously benefited from COST Action support to develop its research network, the team went on to compete against innovators from across Europe at the EIT Jumpstarter Grand Final in Budapest in November 2025, where it didn't just win the Healthcare category - it also took home the Outermost Regions Special Prize. With the technology now advancing toward hospital pilot studies and a finalist spot in the EP PerMed Venture Creator programme, MYLeukaemia is turning a deeply personal mission, sparing patients the toll of ineffective treatment into a scalable clinical tool with the potential to change how blood cancer is treated across Europe.



Figure 55. Hugo Caires, CEO and co-founder of MyLeukaemia (currently rebranded to MyCancer) at the EIT Jumpstarter Grand Final 2025, Budapest, Hungary.

The real measure of impact, though, is what happens after the programme ends. The EIT Jumpstarter alumni continued to scale through 2025.

PrintyMed (Latvia)

PrintyMed is a Latvian deep-tech startup developing biomimetic spider silk for medical and cosmetic applications. Founded in January 2023 by a multidisciplinary team spanning organic chemistry, medicine, and business strategy, the company works in close partnership with the Latvian Institute of Organic Synthesis to engineer lab-grown silk proteins that replicate - and in some respects surpass - the strength and flexibility of natural spider silk, without relying on any animal-derived material.

The company's proprietary, water-based production process yields a silk that is reported to be twice as strong as other artificial spider silks and nearly twice as extensible as natural flagelliform silk under high-humidity conditions, while remaining fully biocompatible and customisable for specific applications. Building on this platform, PrintyMed is developing a pipeline of solutions across regenerative medicine and advanced materials, including organ-on-a-chip membranes for drug screening and disease modelling, biocompatible heart valve prostheses, next-generation wound dressings, artificial organs and tissue scaffolds, and sustainable ingredients for high-end cosmetics.

The team's spider silk research was recognised as one of the most significant scientific achievements in Latvia in 2024 by the Latvian Academy of Sciences,

and the company has since secured innovation voucher funding from the Investment and Development Agency of Latvia to advance its research into cell viability on artificial spider silk hydrogels. PrintyMed was supported by the EIT Jumpstarter and the EIT Jumpstarter Next. In 2025 it continued to grow, securing over €800,000 in external funding, joining the Saudi Biotechnology Accelerator and regularly representing Latvia at international events.

Lightly Technologies (Czechia)

Lightly Technologies is a Czech deep-tech startup building real-time forensic intelligence tools to help law enforcement and public safety agencies detect and trace illicit substances in the field. Spun out of nearly seven years of university research, the company's patented „UV-Fingerprint" method uses light-based chemical identification to turn what was traditionally a slow, lab-bound process into an on-the-spot result - delivered in minutes rather than months.

At the core of the company's offering is Catcher, a portable, field-ready device that identifies drugs and other substances from a single-use test cartridge. Results are automatically synced to a secure, growing global forensic database, enabling investigators to cross-match findings across cases, uncover supply-chain patterns, and coordinate responses across borders - moving beyond simple detection toward genuine forensic intelligence. The device is designed to be intuitive enough for use by law enforcement and public health officers alike, without specialist training.
Originally developed and tested with the Czech Police, the technology has since expanded into international pilots with law enforcement agencies in the United States, including visits to DEA and INTERPOL office in Washington, D.C. Lightly Technologies was supported in the EIT Jumpstarter and EIT Jumpstarter Next. In 2025 it continued to grow, raising approximately €1 million.

Bio Ice Cream Dots (Poland)

Bio Ice Cream Dots is a food-tech startup developing a functional, sugar-free alternative to conventional sweets. Using a patented cryogenic technology, the company transforms organic plant- and dairy-based ingredients into bite-sized, spherical „dots" that preserve taste, texture, and nutritional value while remaining stable at −18°C for standard cold-chain distribution, enabling global scalability. Each product is built on a clean-label formulation, combining fruit and vegetable concentrates, clinically studied postbiotics for gut and microbiome support, high-fibre content, and organic freeze-dried fruit, while staying free of added sugar, with vegan options available across the range. The company's mission is to replace ultra-processed sweets with eco nutrition. Bio Ice Cream Dots was supported in the EIT Jumpstarter and the EIT Jumpstarter Next. In 2025, the startup got into the first cohort of the new EIT initiative - EIT Regional Innovation Booster.



1,500+

individuals in 750 startup teams supported through EIT Jumpstarter



€150M+

in investment raised by EIT Jumpstarter-supported ventures



124

startups formally established through EIT Jumpstarter, across EIT RIS-eligible countries, the Western Balkans and Moldova

Figure 56. EIT Jumpstarter results 2017-2025

EIT Regional Innovation Booster – a new approach to accelerating ecosystems

The EIT Regional Innovation Booster is a new flagship initiative of the EIT, offering targeted support to startups and scaleups in emerging and moderate innovator countries, helping them grow towards commercial success, access international markets, and attract further investment. With a view to launching a broader pilot in at least four countries from 2026, followed by full roll-out from 2029, Poland hosted the pre-pilot phase of the EIT RIB in 2025.



Figure 57. Martin Kern, EIT Director, and Michał Jaros, State Secretary at the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology of Poland, signing the Memorandum of Understanding in May 2025, in Warsaw, Poland

The EIT and the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology of Poland have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to launch the EIT Regional Innovation Booster (EIT RIB) pre-pilot in Poland (May 2025).
The EIT RIB programme, was developed together with national authorities, as well as the Patent Office of the Republic of Poland and the EIT/EIC National Contact Point (NCP) at the National Centre for Research and Development (NCBR). It supports ecosystems by connecting existing funding schemes and initiatives to support the best local startups and scale-ups in internationalisation and commercialisation across the EU. The first edition, launched in 2025, focused on three markets, Spain, Germany, and the Nordics, where the selected ventures receive on-the-ground support to establish pilots, commercial partnerships, and investment leads.



Michał Jaros
State Secretary at the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology of Poland

Poland is ready to lead innovation in the region - and the Regional Innovation Booster will help us do just that. It will empower our entrepreneurs, scaleup our ventures, and give Polish innovation the visibility and support it needs to thrive across Europe and beyond.



Figure 58. The EIT RIB Poland bootcamps in Warsaw, Poland in 2025



Figure 59. Silvio Scerri, CEO Xjenza Malta and Martin Kern, EIT Director signing the MoU in November 2025

Shortly after launching a pilot in Poland, two other countries joined the initiative - Malta and Hungary. The EIT and the Hungarian Ministry of Culture and Innovation renewed their cooperation by signing an updated MoU, confirming that Hungary will pilot EIT RIB in 2026-2028. Similar agreement was signed with Xjenza Malta, Malta's national government agency responsible for research, innovation, and space policy, managing public R&I funding and serving as Malta's National Contact Point for Horizon Europe. In both pilot countries, the EIT RIB will be adjusted to local startup ecosystem needs and co-designed to utilise existing national schemes and EIT support, offering the most promising ventures a seamless journey towards commercialisation and internationalisation in Europe.



Silvio Scerri
CEO at Xjenza Malta

This new Xjenza Malta initiative is very important for Malta as it will offer guidance, funding and expert advice to make ideas commercially viable and ready for internationalisation. Overall, it's about helping Malta's innovators go from lab results to commercialisation.

Why EIT Regional Innovation Booster?

Value for EIT KICs:
Strengthens their pipeline with additional high-potential startups from EIT RIS countries.

Value for Countries:
Delivers coordinated, tailored support to accelerate local startup pipelines.

The EIT RIB is a bespoke support initiative, designed and implemented on a country-by-country basis to reflect local realities – including specific challenges, opportunities, and ecosystem strengths. Rather than applying a one-size-fits-all model, the RIB is co-designed with national authorities, ensuring alignment with national Research and Innovation Smart Specialisation Strategies and providing long-term, place-based support.

Five EIT KICs (EIT Health, EIT Food, EIT RawMaterials, EIT Urban Mobility, EIT Culture and Creativity) received **€5 million** ringfenced to provide follow-up support activities for the EIT RIB alumni.

All KICs are tasked to create internal processes to channel ventures funnelled through the EIT RIB mechanism to their current Business Creation portfolio and investment activities.

The EIT Community Strategic Regional Innovations Cluster leads the overall implementation of the EIT RIB and supports development of the EIT RIB standards in the EIT Community.

1. **Country-by-country implementation:** the highest potential ventures are supported, boosting geographical spread and balance whilst ensuring that any local structural weaknesses are not a barrier to EIT support.
2. **Place-based support:** implementation in close collaboration with national authorities, inter alia, ensuring that targeted support is offered in the most pressing thematic areas.
3. The local EIT Community Hubs will play a strong role in screening the market to identify promising ventures that might otherwise have been overlooked by individual EIT KICs' acceleration activities. The National Contact Points for Horizon Europe are also involved in the process.
4. **Long-term support:** The EIT RIB accompanies ventures for at least three years, with strong involvement of the EIT KICs, complementing rather than replacing support from investors.
5. **Plug-in synergies:** The EIT RIB will ensure that backed ventures showing the highest levels of potential are smoothly plugged-into other initiatives, incl. the KICs' mainstream Business Creation and Support activities.

EIT InfraBooster: unlocking commercial value from public research infrastructure

EIT InfraBooster, led by EIT Food in partnership with the University of Warsaw and the EIT KICs, expanded its footprint to 10 countries in 2025, including Ukraine, Moldova, Kosovo* and Türkiye. The programme trained 120 research and innovation infrastructure owners, and by year-end, nine services had already progressed to market entry. That conversion rate, from training to real market-facing services within the same year, is the sign that the programme is contributing to closing the gap between public R&D investment and commercial return.

„Participating in the EIT InfraBooster program has been a highly enriching and transformative experience. The program strengthened our ability to translate Research Infrastructure into well-defined services while deepening my understanding of how laboratory-based expertise can respond to real needs in the agri-food sector. Beyond service development, the EIT InfraBooster provided an excellent opportunity to expand my professional network, engage with experts from diverse disciplines, and connect with industry and innovation ecosystems across Europe."

Jonida Biturku,
Researcher Faculty of Agriculture and Environment,
Agricultural University of Tirana, Albania



Figure 60. EIT Infrabooster Catalogue of Services 2025

„Our team at the LaBEES greatly benefited from the structured training, mentoring, and support provided through the EIT InfraBooster. The programme helped us transform our laboratory's scientific expertise into a clear, market-oriented service focused on non- hypothetical consumer insights using behavioral and experimental economics methods. I highly recommend the programme to any researchers seeking to connect science with industry needs and create measurable innovation impact. It has significantly strengthened LaBEES's capacity to deliver high-quality, evidence-based consumer analytics to the private sector."

prof. Marina Nacka,
Head of the LaBEES, Faculty of Agricultural Sciences and Food
Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, North Macedonia

„The EIT InfraBooster programme was instrumental in supporting the market introduction of our microplastics analysis and characterization service. The training provided valuable insights into research infrastructure management and service commercialization, helping us align our research expertise with market needs. The innovation voucher created important opportunities to develop, validate, and position our service, contributing directly to faster market entry and increased visibility among potential users. The programme strengthened our ability to translate scientific infrastructure into impactful, market-ready services."

prof. Tanja Ćirković Veličković,
Head of The Center of Research Excellence for MFC, University of Belgrade - Faculty of Chemistry, Serbia

Rebuild Ukraine: sustained, gender-balanced support at national scale

EIT Founders2Founders, led by InnoEnergy, deepened the EIT Community commitment to Ukraine in 2025, adopting a hybrid format that reached the whole country. The programme engaged 76 startups from different sectors, with full gender parity (50/50). In addition, the EIT Community jointly organised another edition of the EIT Red Kalyna programme. In 2025, the initiative, which recognises and supports Ukrainian female innovators, provided them with deep immersion in the Danish innovation ecosystem - visiting leading innovation centres, attending startup and investor meetups, and sharing best practices with the EIT KICs.



Figure 61. EIT Red Kalyna Study Visit in Copenhagen 2025

8. Forward Look

Key Recommendations and lessons learned

Territorial embedding drives participation



Hosting programmes in RIS countries consistently produced higher engagement rates and stronger contextual relevance. SpeedLauncher (81% EIT RIS participants), ClimaTech Connect (76% RIS participants), EIT Food's 85 country-level activities across 15 RIS countries, including 49 Hub workshops and 31 Hub awareness events are clear evidence of the power of embedded, place-based delivery.

Cross-KIC collaboration lowers costs and multiplies reach per euro spent



EIT Community Hubs are explicitly structured to represent every KIC through a single local presence. Adding 6 new Hubs in 2025 to the network of 24 Hubs, proved the expansion affordable and effective. The EIT Community Hubs provided leads directly to the EIT KICs, supporting their business targets and enabling deep market penetration.

Climate innovation in EIT RIS regions attracts extraordinary capital



The ClimAccelerator's €202.7 million in investment leveraged from 54 EIT RIS startups reveals that climate-tech entrepreneurship in widening regions is commercially compelling at scale. This finding should inform future EIT RIS investment strategies and programme design.

MoC transition can be a model for EIT community evolution



For instance Climate KIC's successful transition from partnership agreement to Memorandum of Cooperation, maintaining all activities while reducing administrative complexity, demonstrates that EIT community relationships can evolve without loss of impact. Intentional hub collaboration prevented duplication.

Ecosystem mappings and high-level dialogue unlock systemic change



FWD Greece, Scaleup Portugal, and the Lithuanian Health Data Pilot - all born from sustained EIT Community engagement - illustrate how analytics and conversation can catalyse nationally significant policy and innovation outcomes from EIT RIS regions.

Gender-responsive design produces strong results across all EIT KICs



Programmes with explicit gender mandates (EIT Food EWA: 100% female; EIT Red Kalyna; 100% female; Women InnoVenture: 100%; EIT Culture and Creativity Education: 73%) significantly outperform sector averages. EIT Food's overall participation rate of 62% female across all 2025 RIS activities is exceptional for the agri-food sector. Multiple EIT RIS female founders won Women TechEU grants in 2025.

Industrial scaleup from RIS regions is commercially and strategically viable



InnoEnergy's portfolio in 2025, including – founded in Estonia – Skeleton Technologies' two European factories (Varkaus and Leipzig), ElevenEs' Edge574 Blade Cell launch, Gradis' TAURON agreement covering 700,000+ lighting points, and Heatventors' €4 million Series A, demonstrates conclusively that RIS-origin deep-tech companies can reach full industrial scale and global market relevance.

Workforce skills infrastructure is a necessary complement to innovation funding in EIT RIS regions



The InnoEnergy Skills Institute (145+ job roles, 600+ hours of content, 29+ certificates, 10+ languages) demonstrates that scalable skills systems are essential to convert clean-energy investment into durable employment and industrial capability across widening regions. The programmes offering AI and cybersecurity upskilling (e.g. offered by 28DIGITAL) support European citizens in better adapting to the future marketplace.

Experimenting with new approaches to ecosystem acceleration is no longer optional, it's a necessity



Business creation, education, and innovation remain essential, but they aren't enough on their own. Real, lasting impact comes from building innovation journeys together: with national and regional authorities who can turn a pilot into policy, with local ecosystem actors who know the terrain, with the full Knowledge Triangle of business, research, and education working as one system, and with the startups and scaleups these efforts ultimately serve (EIT RIB first cohort in Poland focused on accessing three markets, aligned with national priorities, and an ecosystem gap analysis developed together with the ecosystem representatives).

Outlook for 2026

Building on the strong 2025 results, the EIT RIS portfolio is well-positioned to deepen its impact in 2026. The 2025 EIT RIS delivered across nine EIT KICs spanning digital innovation, agri-food, healthcare, cultural and creative industries, climate systems change, raw materials, advanced manufacturing, sustainable energy, and urban mobility has demonstrated conclusively that inclusive, regionally embedded, and cross-thematic innovation support can deliver extraordinary returns for Europe's widening regions. With 395,445 participants educated, 7,410 startups created and supported, and more than €3.81 billion in investment attracted since 2014, the EIT Community enters 2026 with record momentum and a deepened commitment to balanced, sustainable, innovation-driven development across Europe.

Building on the successful establishment of EIT Community Hubs across all RIS-eligible countries by the end of 2025, **the EIT will continue to expand its local presence** starting from 2026. The next phase will focus on extending the Community Hub model to selected countries beyond the RIS framework, including Kosovo* and Armenia, further broadening access to EIT opportunities and services. Through this expansion, the EIT aims to strengthen stakeholder engagement, enhance the visibility of its activities, and foster deeper integration of local innovation ecosystems into the wider EIT Community, contributing to a more connected and inclusive European innovation landscape. EIT is also looking on increasing collaboration within local networks of EIT Community Hubs, including EIT KICs Country Representatives (sector specific Hubs run by EIT KICs) and thematic experts.

Following its launch phase, **the EIT Regional Innovation Booster is expected to expand its reach between 2026 and 2028**, providing tailored, long-term support to an increasing number of high-potential ventures across EIT RIS countries. Building on lessons learned from the pre-pilot in Poland, the initiative will strengthen connections between regional innovators, EIT KICs, investors, and business partners, helping participating ventures accelerate their growth, internationalisation, and investment readiness in other EU Member States, such as Malta. The Booster will continue to serve as a bridge between regional innovation ecosystems and wider European support mechanisms, contributing to the development of a stronger pipeline of scalable ventures and reinforcing innovation performance in emerging innovation regions.

In the years to come, **the EIT RIS will continue to strengthen its engagement beyond the EU's borders**, building on its proven role as a flexible and impactful instrument for fostering innovation in neighbouring regions. As geopolitical and economic developments reinforce the importance of closer cooperation with the Union's neighbourhood, the EIT will explore opportunities to broaden EIT participation and further tailor its support to regional needs.

As discussions on the next EU Research and Innovation Framework Programme advance, the EIT RIS is expected to play a growing role in reducing Europe's innovation divide and strengthening emerging innovation ecosystems. Drawing on more than a decade of experience, the EIT RIS scheme will continue to inform EU innovation policy while serving as a key instrument for widening participation, building regional innovation capacity, and connecting local ecosystems to European networks. Through its strong regional presence and stakeholder engagement, the EIT RIS will contribute to a more inclusive, resilient, and competitive European innovation landscape.

Annexe 1. Stories of inspiring female innovators

Gender inclusion is a cross-cutting priority of the EIT RIS. The following profiles highlight exceptional women from RIS countries who have advanced through EIT-supported programmes in 2025, spanning agri-food innovation, digital innovation, climate technology, and creative industries.



Katarzyna Jaworska

BioVainTech

Compostable packaging technology

DATA INFO

Company: BioVainTech / Bloomen
Founder: Poland
Support: EIT Food

When Kasia Jaworska joined the EIT Food Empowering Women in Agrifood (EWA) Programme with an idea for functional herbal teas from sunflower root, a severe flood destroyed her crops mid-programme. Rather than withdrawing, she discovered that the roots – though damaged – remained usable as a biomaterial. She pivoted to develop BioVainTech: a patented, biodegradable composite made from sunflower pith enriched with natural nanocellulose, processed enzymatically to produce compostable packaging for HoReCa, cosmetics, agriculture, and textiles. BioVainTech is the first technology globally to utilise sunflower pith as a high-value biomaterial and meets OKcompost Home standards. Kasia has already secured partnerships in Poland, Norway, and India.



Janika Aan

FoodID / InsightData OÜ

Digital Food transparency platform

DATA INFO

Company: FoodID / InsightData OÜ
Founder: Estonia
Support: EIT Food

Janika Aan founded FoodID to address a persistent gap in the food system: packaging information is complex, inconsistent, and often unreadable. FoodID connects producers, retailers, and consumers through a single dynamic QR code, the first solution to integrate all three target groups in one platform. Consumers receive personalised, science-based health recommendations; retailers benefit from automated data flows and digital shelf-life data to reduce food waste; producers receive anonymous consumer behaviour analytics and a reliable channel for regulatory-compliant information. In 2025, Janika launched a pilot testing 62 products.



Iulia Andrițoiu Caizer
QuickLegal
Tech support for debt recovery rates

DATA INFO

Company: QuickLegal SRL
CEO & Co-founder: Romania
Support: 28DIGITAL

Co-founded with two other women, QuickLegal is a Romanian legal-tech platform that helps individuals and small businesses navigate legal processes and improve debt/claims recovery rates through an accessible, tech-driven service. Iulia secured for QuickLegal a €75,000 Women TechEU grant (top 3.6% of applicants), was the only Romanian startup in Vodafone Portugal's Open Innovation programme.



Sorina Uleia
Recycllux
AI-powered ocean plastic detection

DATA INFO

Company: Recycllux
Founder: Romania
Support: Climate KIC

Sorina Uleia founded Recycllux to tackle plastic pollution in the Black Sea using AI satellite data analysis. In 2025, she won the Women TechEU 4th Call, became a mentor in the Romania ClimAccelerator, and won the AI+Climate Global Award from She Shapes AI. Her trajectory - from ClimAccelerator graduate to multi-award-winning founder and programme mentor - represents one of the most complete RIS female success arcs of the 2025 cycle.



Yağmur Aydemir | Kami
Storytelling platform turning readers into a paying creator economy

DATA INFO

Company: Kami
Founder: Türkiye
Support: EIT Culture and Creativity

Founder of Türkiye's largest storytelling platform, Yağmur Aydemir was selected for Forbes 30 Under 30 and won the third prize in EIT Culture and Creativity Shape Accelerator. Kami has passed break-even, reached 1.6 million users, generating roughly 395–400 million monthly sessions and empowers thousands of diverse creators, especially women, to publish, earn, and transform their stories into global IP.



Lenka Röhryová

Vitadio

AI-driven digital therapeutics for type 2 diabetes and prediabetes

DATA INFO

Company: Vitadio
Co-founder: Czechia
Support: EIT Health

Vitadio became the first digital health application for type 2 diabetes to receive permanent DiGA reimbursement status in Germany, supported by EIT Health's Smart Ageing Camp, Health Venture Lab, and Bridgehead programmes. Total funding raised reached €4 million, and in 2025 Lenka with her team published a new clinical study stating that 3.3 times more patients reached their target HbA1c (<7%) using Vitadio compared to standard care, which is a stronger result than their earlier 2022 studies, and their most recent published clinical evidence as of 2025.



Kätlin Kaare

UP Catalyst

Sustainable graphite from CO_2, carbon nanomaterials

DATA INFO

Company: UP Catalyst
Co-founder: Estonia
Support: EIT RawMaterials

Kätlin Kaare co-founded UP Catalyst, a startup born from university research, which converts industrial CO_2 emissions into sustainable graphite and carbon nanomaterials for the EV battery supply chain. The company entered the EIT ecosystem through EIT Jumpstarter (2019) and has grown with sustained EIT RawMaterials support through Acceleration and KAVA upscaling grants totalling over €3.7 million. In 2025, Kätlin with her team launched the Generation 2 reactor, developed under the CO2Carbon consortium, winning the World Economic Forum's Carbon Capture and Utilisation Challenge and securing €18 million EIB financing.



Farnaz Baksh
Robot Study Companion

DATA INFO

Company/Project: Robot Study Companion (RSC)
Junior Research Fellow, University of Tartu | Estonia
Support: EIT Manufacturing

Farnaz Baksh, a Junior Research Fellow at the University of Tartu, developed the Robot Study Companion (RSC), an open-source, low-cost, research-backed social robot designed to support higher education students struggling with isolation and waning motivation, born from the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. By combining human-robot interaction research with constructivist learning theory, she created a tool that provides both academic structure and emotional scaffolding.
Her innovation journey began in Guyana, where she founded the University of Guyana Robotics Club in 2016, mentored national robotics teams, developed curricula for schools with special educational needs, and inspired over 70 girls through the Girls Code initiative. Through the EIT Manufacturing Doctoral Programme, Farnaz strengthened her entrepreneurial, technical, and leadership skills, developing a sustainable model for scaling the RSC globally. Her work has earned international recognition including the 30 Under 30 Caribbean Changemaker Award (2022), the Women in ICT Award of Excellence (2021), the Systers Pass It On Award (2024), and an EIT Changemaker Award Nomination (2025).



Tuba Yilmaz Gözbaşı
Optiyol
Optimisation platform for logistics

DATA INFO

Company: Optiyol
Co-founder and COO: Türkiye
Support: EIT Urban Mobility

Tuba Yilmaz Gözbaşı co-founded Optiyol, a route optimisation platform that helps logistics, retail, and food and beverage companies reduce costs and improve delivery performance. Compared to traditional methods, Optiyol reduces fuel costs by 15–25% and fleet size by 5–10%, while improving on-time delivery rates by 20–30%. The platform is used to optimise and track over 300 distribution operations across different geographies. Optiyol has received a total of €368,000 in EIT Urban Mobility funding and participated in the EIT Urban Mobility Sustainable Logistics Accelerator 2022 and the EIT Community Supernovas Investment Forum in 2023. In 2025, Optiyol achieved 40% growth with major new clients including IKEA, Danone Türkiye, and Gulf Coca-Cola, and reported generated revenue of €883,990 (2024). The company won six G2 Spring 2025 Awards (Best Meets Requirements, Best Support, Easiest To Do Business With, Easiest To Use, High Performer, Momentum Leader) and is beginning its Series A fundraising with a focus on European market expansion.

Annexe 2. EIT Jumpstarter 2025 Winners

In 2025 the 9th edition of a flagship EIT Jumpstarter, a pre-acceleration programme took place. In the Grand Finale 42 startups from 17 countries competed for a total prize pool of €132,500. Here are the winners in respective categories:

Healthcare:

WINNER: **MYLeukaemia**

RUNNERS-UP:
Prospect Biotech, CheMOnitor

New European Bauhaus:

WINNER: **MycoNest**

RUNNERS-UP:
Groundwork, Virtual Sound Media

Energy & Renewables:

WINNER: **RenU Fuel Solutions**

RUNNERS-UP:
Beaver Nexus, ARKai (formerly CirQa)

Raw Materials:

WINNER: **ProSpec**

RUNNERS-UP:
OPS Technologies, Chitolastic

Smart Cities & Mobility:

WINNER: **SmartRoads**

RUNNERS-UP: BridgeAID, SignalWings

Rebuild Ukraine:

WINNER: **Mindship**

RUNNERS-UP: VR Revive, OMG Tetra

Food & Agritech:

WINNER: **Polium Scientific**
(previously Taze Tut)

RUNNERS-UP:
BOREAL CACAO Ltd, AquaBoostNano

Special Prizes:

WESTERN BALKANS SPECIAL PRIZE:
AquaBoostNano

MEDITERRANEAN MEMBER STATES SPECIAL PRIZE:
RenU Fuel Solutions

OUTERMOST REGIONS (OMR) SPECIAL PRIZE:
MYLeukaemia

Annexe 3. Acronyms and Abbreviations

Acronym	Meaning
CEL	Consumer Engagement Labs
CLC	Co-location Centre
DiGA	Digitale Gesundheitsanwendungen (German Digital Health Applications register)
ECO	EIT Community Officer
EEN	Enterprise Europe Network
EIS	European Innovation Scoreboard
EIT	European Institute of Innovation & Technology
EIC	European Innovation Council
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Funds
ESO	Entrepreneurship Support Organisation
EWA	Empowering Women in Agrifood (programme)
HDBI	Hellenic Development Bank of Investments
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HTA	Health Technology Assessment
KIC	Knowledge and Innovation Community
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
KTI	Knowledge Triangle Integration (Education, Business Creation, Innovation)
MDR	EU Medical Device Regulation (2017/745)
MoC	Memorandum of Cooperation
NCP	National Contact Point
OMR	Outermost Regions
RCC	Regional Cooperation Council
RIB	EIT Regional Innovation Booster
RIS	EIT Regional Innovation Scheme
SIA	EIT Strategic Innovation Agenda (2021–2027)
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprise
SPIN	Science to Innovation (programme)

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