

## EIT Higher Education Initiative

# D7.7

# Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework

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## DOCUMENT INFORMATION

### D7.7 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework

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\* **R**=Document, report; **DEM**=Demonstrator, pilot, prototype; **DEC**=website, patent filings, videos, etc.; **OTHER**=other

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## ABOUT THE HIGHER EDUCATION INITIATIVE

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The EIT Higher Education Initiative is designed to build innovation and entrepreneurial capacity within higher education by integrating HEIs into Europe's innovation ecosystems and value chains. This is more than funding - it's a catalyst for change. The initiative connects institutions with industry and research, fostering collaboration where it matters most.

At the heart of this initiative is the EIT Knowledge Triangle Model - the integration of business, education, and research. Participating HEIs are expected to use this model as a practical tool to enable systemic, institutional transformation. They will also engage with Smart Specialisation Strategies, apply the Regional Innovation Impact Assessment (RIIA) framework, and contribute to the goals of the EIT Regional Innovation Scheme (EIT RIS).

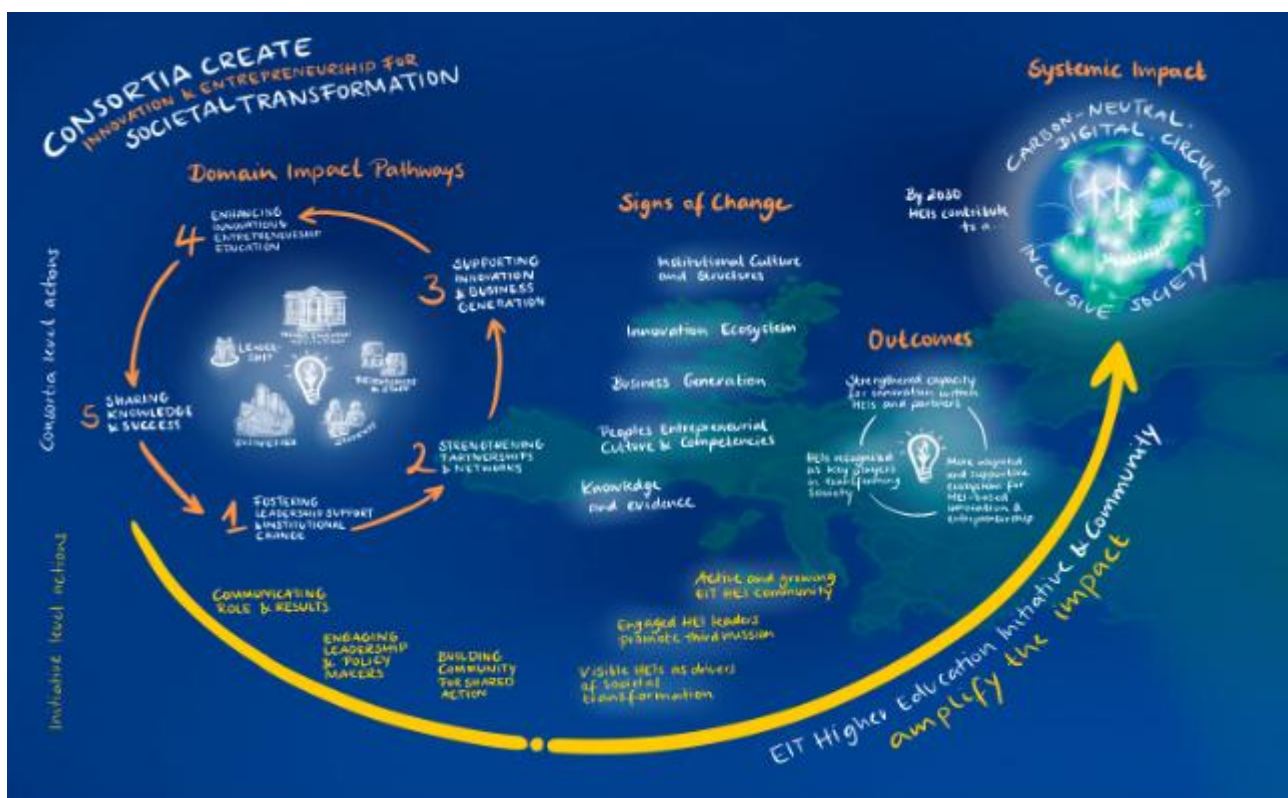
This approach strengthens ties between HEIs and their regional innovation ecosystems and sets the stage for long-term impact, encouraging institutions to tap into additional funding opportunities beyond the initial project.

HEIs are invited to develop proposals that deliver on six key Actions - building entrepreneurial capacity, embedding innovation, and connecting with ecosystems. The outcome? Tangible transformation. Real results. And a stronger innovation future for Europe.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The EIT Higher Education Initiative is a pan-European Cross-KIC initiative that supports Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to translate research into innovation and entrepreneurship and to better integrate into innovation ecosystems. The initiative aims for systemic impact by connecting HEIs and other partners at various levels, building capacities and creating awareness for HEIs as drivers of transformative societal change. The monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) approach generates insights on what works, what is being achieved and where to improve and adjust.

The **MEL approach** adopted by the EIT Higher Education Initiative is guided by the Regional Innovation Impact Assessment Framework (RIIA), Developmental Evaluation and the Horizon Europe Impact Pathways. It is informed by the EIT Strategic Innovation Agenda and EIT Impact framework. The Theory of Change describes how the initiative intends to achieve change and impact. **Quantitative and qualitative methods** are combined to enable both **accountability and learning**. Learning is a **co-creative process** together with stakeholders, **through sensemaking** and evaluation.



The Theory of Change describes how change is achieved at two levels. At the **level of the consortia**, HEIs collaborate with partners to develop innovation and business and enhance entrepreneurial education. These changes are

amplified at the **level of the Initiative** through communication, leadership engagement and community building. These outputs lead to three main outcomes: **(1) strengthened capacity for innovation within HEIS and partners; (2) more integrated and supportive ecosystems for HEI-based innovation and entrepreneurship; and (3) HEIs are recognized as key players in transforming society.** Signs of change become visible within the HEIs, their regional ecosystems, within the community and across Europe. Ultimately, **the outcomes contribute to a carbon-neutral, digital, circular and inclusive society.**

The MEL framework captures data and insight along this envisioned process and thus enables the Initiative to check whether it is on track and whether the assumptions hold. It thus feeds into the Theory of Change as a living learning device.

**Performance monitoring and results reporting** - Monitoring also happens at Initiative level along a set of KPIs. The purpose of Monitoring is to ensure Consortia are on track to create innovation and entrepreneurship and to detect any challenges and adaptive management required. **EIT Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)** reporting is the main accountability mechanism for the EIT Performance reviews. **Impact Monitoring** - Consortia also monitor changes through **Most Significant Stories and Signs of Change** in a systematic way to reflect on a range of changes, including those that may be unexpected, subtle, or intangible. **This data is aggregated at the portfolio level.**

The **Learning framework** provides an opportunity to learn what works in generating impact and how it works. How are we contributing to address societal challenges? How is ecosystem integration working, and what are the results? How is knowledge transferred, and how does institutional change happen? Learning events in the community of practice and **Sensemaking workshops** serve to co-create these insights and thus inform the evolution and strategic direction of the Initiative. Sensemaking forms the core link between project level evidence generated through impact monitoring and the evidence learning that it generates at the Initiative level. Sensemaking is central to the delivery of EIT HEI Initiative as a structured approach for linking data analysis, insights, and synthesis into to produce intelligence that enables decision making.

**Evaluation** is also a critical moment to synthesize diverse sources of evidence from the initiative's monitoring and learning systems, while deliberately collecting additional data on outcome and impact indicators, e.g. via survey. From these higher-level perspectives, long-term shifts can be detected and the contribution of the Initiative to the desired carbon-neutral, circular, digital, and inclusive systems becomes more tangible.

## 1. Purpose and users of the MEL framework

The overall purpose of the EIT Higher Education Initiative MEL Framework is to provide robust and common framework for conducting Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning at and between two scales: (1) Projects; (2) Initiative (portfolio level). The Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Framework is built around stakeholder interests, needs, and the core principles they represent, as well as the design of the EIT Higher Education Initiative. It therefore serves multiple purposes as described below.

### 1.1 Purpose and intended users

#### Purpose

##### Accountability

The EIT Higher Education Initiative is funded by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT). In turn, the EIT Higher Education Initiative provides project funding to Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and their project consortia. This public investment aims to create a sustainable return in terms of building the innovation and entrepreneurship culture and capacity of HEIs and their constituents, as well as integrating HEIs with their regional and European ecosystems to drive innovation for societal goals. Monitoring the project and initiative activities and the Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) with dedicated output indicators generates accountability. At the same time, regular evaluation, harnessing aggregated consortium- and initiative-level output indicators, key outcome and impact indicators, and insights from the monitoring, evaluation, and learning frameworks will inform critical questions on the EIT Higher Education Initiative's effectiveness and long-term impact.

##### Learning on project and initiative level

Integrating the "third mission" of innovation and entrepreneurship is an ongoing learning process for every HEI. Likewise, driving innovation and entrepreneurship in regional ecosystems, the EIT Higher Education Community, or with partners across Europe, is a learning journey. The EIT Higher Education Community is in a unique position to harvest and share those learnings among its partners as well as with the wider public and many likeminded innovation actors across continents, disciplines, and sectors. The MEL Framework facilitates learning on this level by learning about impacts on HEI, regional ecosystems and society. The MEL framework is also dedicated to learning about good practice and learning to evolve with changing external contexts.

Adaptive management is paramount also to consortia, as partners are often new to one another as are joint project activities. The MEL Framework addresses this need through various feedback loops and tools to capture lessons and draw conclusions within projects. Moreover, it captures perceived changes through storytelling and asking consortia to self-assess their progress in regular intervals.

##### Communication and Visibility

The project consortia generate innovation from initial ideas to start-ups as well as new or improved products, services, and processes finding their way to the market through partnering businesses. The quality and number of collaborations among HEIs, research institutions, and businesses, the shifts in people's mindsets and capacities and myriad innovations provide rich material for communication. Developing Most Significant Change Stories, that is one of the methods adopted by the MEL Framework, is itself a learning and reflection exercise, and helps others access and identify the meaningful changes. In addition, aggregating outputs and outcomes across the initiative provides numbers that show the critical role of HEIs as drivers of innovation. This material can help shift the mindset of HEI leaders, policy makers, as well as staff, students and business partners.

### **Intended users**

The EIT Higher Education Initiative engages multiple stakeholders, some of whom directly use the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) framework, while others serve as its target audience.

MEL Users: These are stakeholders who actively engage with and apply MEL insights to guide decision-making, learning, improve implementation, and communicate and enhance impact. They include:

- Higher Education Initiative consortia partners including academic and non-academic consortia partners
- Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs)
- The European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT)

MEL Target Audience: These stakeholders do not directly implement the MEL Framework but can benefit from the insights it generates to inform policy, strategy, and broader innovation efforts. They include:

- European Union policymakers
- HEI leaders
- Local and regional governments

By serving both users and a broader audience, the MEL framework ensures that data-driven insights contribute to continuous learning, institutional development, and policy influence across multiple levels. A more detailed description of users and target audiences for the MEL framework is included in Annex 3.

## **2.2 MEL Approach**

The EIT Higher Education Initiative is part of the EIT Strategic Innovation Agenda<sup>1</sup> and hence the EIT Impact Framework. EIT defines innovation as 'a process and an outcome by which new ideas respond to societal or economic needs and demand and generate new products, services or business and organisational models that are successfully introduced into an existing market or that can create new markets and that provide value to society.' It follows the European strategy for universities, which aims to empower universities as agents of change in the twin green and

digital transitions. It thus also aligns with the Horizon Europe Impact Pathways, which include scientific, societal and economic impacts.

The EIT Higher Education Initiative's MEL approach is guided by developmental evaluation, which is focused on learning and adaptation alongside project implementation. It takes a generative approach, focusing on structured reflection and dialogue as key ingredients for shared learning, adaptation and, ultimately, impact.

The Regional Innovation Impact Assessment Framework (RI2A) is an important inspiration. The RI2A framework presents an approach and analytical framework specific to measuring universities' contribution to system change. It proposes a 'narrative with numbers' framework: a narrative case study supported by indicators to identify, categorise and explain the (potential) impact they have on their regional innovation ecosystem. This 'multi-method, multi-sources' approach has several advantages over purely qualitative case studies as they allow for a greater degree of objectivity, comparability and tracking of progress over time. The case studies need to be conducted by qualified experts and reviewed by expert panels. While such an in-depth investigation is only possible during evaluation, and for a sample of projects, all projects are guided to develop Most Significant Change stories based on this approach. In addition, the RI2A framework has guided the development of the EIT Higher Education initiative's outcome and impact indicators.

The EIT Higher Education Initiative acts within a dense and complex network of actors, that interact among each other and with a multitude of external players at local, regional, national and international levels. Attribution to impacts such as competitiveness, economic growth or job creation in a specific region is hence difficult to establish. Much more important than measuring exact contributions to downstream impacts is the self-assessment of participants on where and how the Initiative-related activities are making a tangible difference, and where learning and adaptation are happening. These insights are captured along the MEL process, within projects via their mid-term review that includes KPIs reporting, their reflection on 'Signs of Change,' and other qualitative questions, and across the Initiative through Sensemaking Workshops and other learning formats. Similarly, the outcome and impact indicators reflect the need for complexity and multi-method approaches. The same holds true for the Initiative-level actions: staying aware and in dialogue about perceived changes and required adaptations enables the team to continuously improve results and amplify impact.

For accountability purposes, quantitative measures of progress are indispensable. These focus on countable outputs of activities, e.g. number of participants or innovations, and follow the EIT Indicator Framework.

In conclusion, the nature of the EIT Higher Education Initiative demands a multi-layered MEL approach, that can be used flexibly to support the needs of different users and audiences across scales. In summary, the EIT Higher Education Initiative MEL framework:

- Follows a theory-based approach, based on an aligned Theory of Change that explains how, where, and why projects and the initiative bring about success and impact.

- Combines quantitative and qualitative methods and generally a “narrative with numbers” approach that enables learning through triangulation and contextualization.
- Engages all participants in collective sense-making processes at the level of the individual partners, consortia and the Initiative as a whole.

## 2.3 MEL Principles

The MEL system has been developed based on five principles.

**User centred:** The MEL system is strictly designed to serve the needs of its users. These include the HEI Consortia Partners and HEI leaders as participants, the EIT Higher Education Initiative as the implementing organisation, as well as the EIT and the European Commission as the funders. Different users have different needs, including accountability, learning and communication. The MEL process and outputs serve these needs (details in annex 4).

**Learning focused:** The EIT Higher Education Initiative and its community provide a space for learning: learning about impact, learning what works, and learning for the future evolution of the initiative. The end results are HEIs learning how to drive innovation and entrepreneurship for a more carbon-neutral, circular, digital and inclusive society together with other HEIs and external partners. The MEL process is also designed to harvest a wide range of indicators and datasets that enables and supports the learning process. It invites dialogue and reflection and creates pathways for identifying and sharing good practices and other insights. It also encourages HEIs to chart their development pathway and track progress along the way. Learning should also be a principle for the MEL itself: the MEL process should be reviewed and adapted over time, based on feedback from users and effectiveness with regards to the objectives.

**Dialogue based:** Learning happens through experience, reflection and dialogue. Dialogue enables participants to share insights, process them further, distil what is meaningful for others, and take decisions on the way forward. Rather than focusing too much on documentation and analysis, the MEL process encourages reflection and dialogue at all levels of the EIT Higher Education Initiative: within HEIs, Consortia, the Initiative and the community of partners. Focal points have been defined as spaces for dialogue, including the mid-term review of the Consortia, Sensemaking and other learning events of the community, and the strategy retreat of the EIT Higher Education Initiative team.

**Embedded/Integrated:** MEL, from this perspective, is not a separate process, but deeply integrated with other core processes, in particular communication and community engagement, as well as strategy. MEL creates input for learning and communication, especially through Most Significant Stories, but also through Learning and Sensemaking workshops. The latter is also a central event for the community. Moreover, they help identify good practices which are shared in the community via the Community Platform.

**Adaptive:** the EIT Higher Education Initiative monitoring system will evolve with the maturity and growth of the Initiative and the changing external context. This adaptive monitoring approach means that the EIT Higher Education

Initiative reviews its MEL framework and practices on a regular basis and adapts them to the evolving context in which the EIT Higher Education Initiative operates. The adaptive nature of the monitoring system is essential as projects develop at different speeds.

## 2. Overview of the EIT Higher Education Initiative and its Theory of Change

The EIT Higher Education Initiative is a pan-European Cross-KIC initiative supporting collaboration between Higher Education Institutions with research institutions and business partners. Jointly, they foster institutional change, integrate with their ecosystems through collaboration, and drive innovation and entrepreneurship through education and other activities. The visualised Theory of Change gives an overview of how actions by consortia, and as amplified by the EIT Higher Education Initiative, are leading to signs of change, outcomes, and eventually systemic impact.

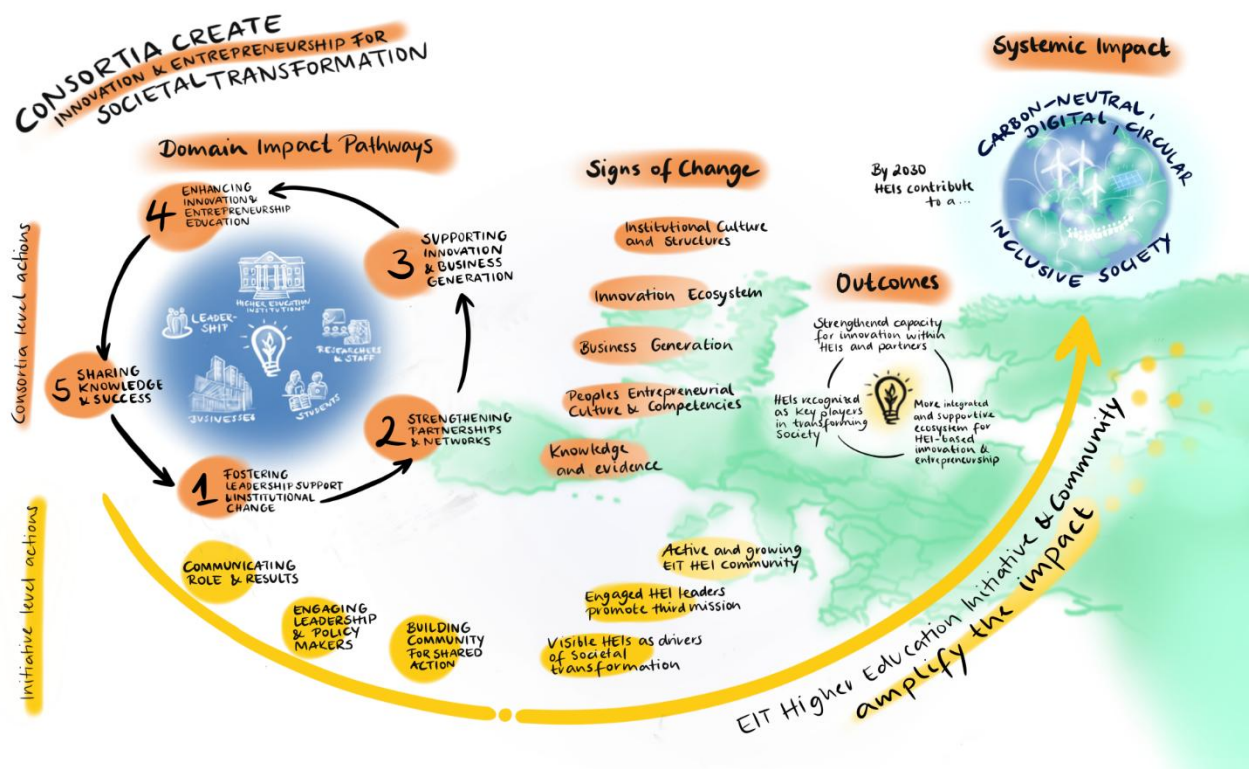


Figure 1: EIT Higher Education Initiative Theory of Change Visual

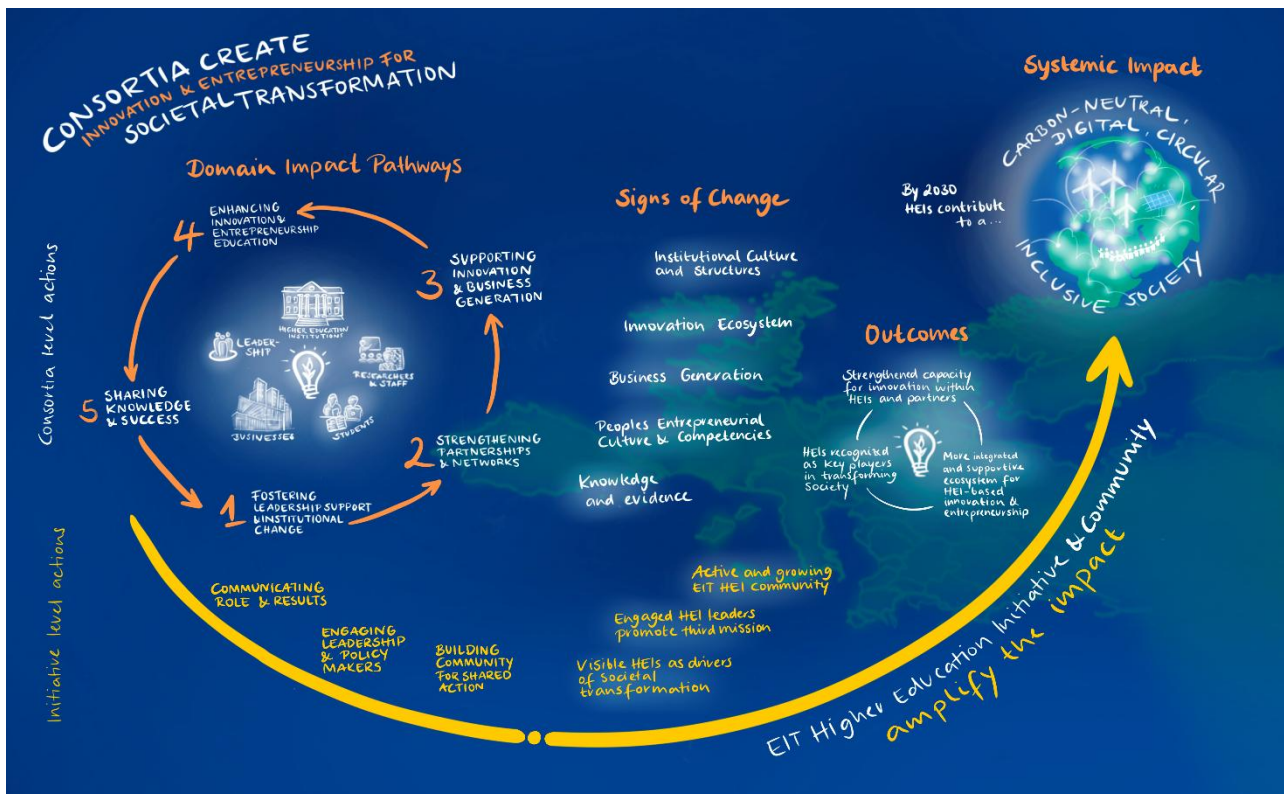


Figure 1a: EIT Higher Education Initiative Theory of Change Visual (second version)

With each funded project, consortia are formed across the knowledge triangle, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), research, and business. Jointly they self-assess their innovation and entrepreneurship capacity, devise a project plan contributing to their own innovation journey and to a carbon neutral, digital, circular, and inclusive society. By selecting and detailing a set of actions under the five domain-action-impact pathways, each project plan aligns with the overall Theory of Change of the EIT Higher Education Initiative:

- Domain I: Fostering leadership support and institutional change
- Domain II: Strengthening partnerships and networks
- Domain III: Supporting Innovation and Business generation
- Domain IV: Enhancing innovation and entrepreneurship education
- Domain V: Sharing knowledge and success

In this way, the Consortia inspire institutional change within their own structures, build innovation and entrepreneurship capacity with staff, students, and partners, and form new collaborations with their ecosystems. Thus, they realize innovative ideas through products, services, processes or business models that contribute to

societal objectives. Each consortium is supported by a specialized KIC on their way toward purpose-driven innovation for societal goals.

### **Joint amplification**

Fostered by the EIT Higher Education Initiative and the KICs, a Community of Practice facilitates learning, good practice exchange, collaboration and joint action among all project consortia and cohorts over time. Jointly and with dedicated support of the EIT HEI Initiative, they amplify the impact of each project and the EIT Higher Education Community at large through:

- Communicating the role of HEIs as drivers of innovation and entrepreneurship through success stories and shared results targeting HEI leaders, staff, students, policy makers, and future partners in the wider public.
- Nurturing dialogue among HEI leaders and policy makers about HEI's third mission and the necessary enabling environment for HEIs to increasingly drive societal transformations, innovation and entrepreneurship.
- Amplifying effectiveness and collaboration through good practices and shared resources.

The Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Framework outlined in this document is designed to actively support the objectives of all stakeholders involved in the initiative. By integrating effective mechanisms for monitoring, learning, and evaluation, the framework ensures continuous assessment of progress, facilitates ongoing learning, and enables informed decision-making.

Amplified by Initiative- and Community-level actions, Consortia generate new ways of working, teaching, and collaborating, that lead to intermediate changes. These signs of change can be observed first hand by the consortia along the five impact domains:

- Institutional Culture and structure (Engaged and Committed HEI Leaders Driving the Third Mission)
- Innovation Ecosystem (Networked HEIs and ecosystems collaborating)
- Innovation and Business (Innovations driving solutions to societal challenges)
- People's entrepreneurial culture and competences (Entrepreneurial students and staff with the skills and mindsets to innovate)
- Knowledge and evidence (Learning driven EIT HE Initiative Community)

### **Assumed transmission from actions to change**

The signs of change are assumed to reinforce other intermediate changes in an upward spiral.

- Stronger leadership and institutions attract more and better partners
- Working with partners enables more relevant education and innovation
- Quality education builds capabilities for innovation and entrepreneurship among students, staff and partners

- Based on these capacities, students and partners can develop more and more successful innovation and businesses contributing to societal transformation
- Sharing the knowledge and success gained from these efforts strengthens HEI leadership support

In sum, this reinforcing spiral is assumed to contribute to lasting outcomes which in turn solidify the role of HEIs and their partners as drivers of change, innovation and entrepreneurship within their respective ecosystems.

The EIT Higher Education Initiative as a whole contributes to three broad outcomes which will be captured by their respective outcome indicators:

Outcome 1: Strengthened capacity for innovation and entrepreneurship within HEIs and partners.

Outcome indicator 1.1: Quality and extent of institutional change and engagement

Outcome indicator 1.2: Perception of improvements of capacity for innovation and entrepreneurship

Outcome 2: A more integrated and supportive ecosystem for HEI-based innovation and entrepreneurship

Outcome indicator 2.1: Quality of integration of HEI-based ecosystem, using regional analysis

Outcome indicator 2.2: Perception of stronger regional integration

Outcome 3: HEIs recognised as drivers of societal transformation

Outcome indicator 3.1: Perception of HEI roles in driving societal transformation

Ultimately, this process enables mid- to longer-term impacts at two levels:

By 2027, more inclusive and well-integrated HEIs will bring solutions to challenges to the market.

By 2030, the EIT Higher Education Initiative expects HEIs to contribute significantly to a carbon-neutral, digital, circular and inclusive society through innovation and entrepreneurship.

These impacts can be captured by the following proxy indicators, while the actual impact on the future of our societies may be subject to in-depth case studies as part of ex-post impact evaluations in the future:

Impact indicator 1: co-publications between HEIs, research organisations and business partners addressing the transformation toward a carbon neutral, digital, circular, and inclusive society

Impact indicator 2: number of active collaborations between HEIs, research organisations and business partners driving innovation and entrepreneurship toward a carbon neutral, digital, circular, and inclusive society

Impact indicator 3: a) amount of capital raised, b) annual revenue, c) jobs created by start-ups and businesses collaborating with HEIs and research organisations to drive the transformation toward a carbon neutral, digital, circular, and inclusive society

Figure 2 below depicts the Theory of Change in a simplified form including shortened signs of change compared to the full list of signs of change as used by the MEL tool.

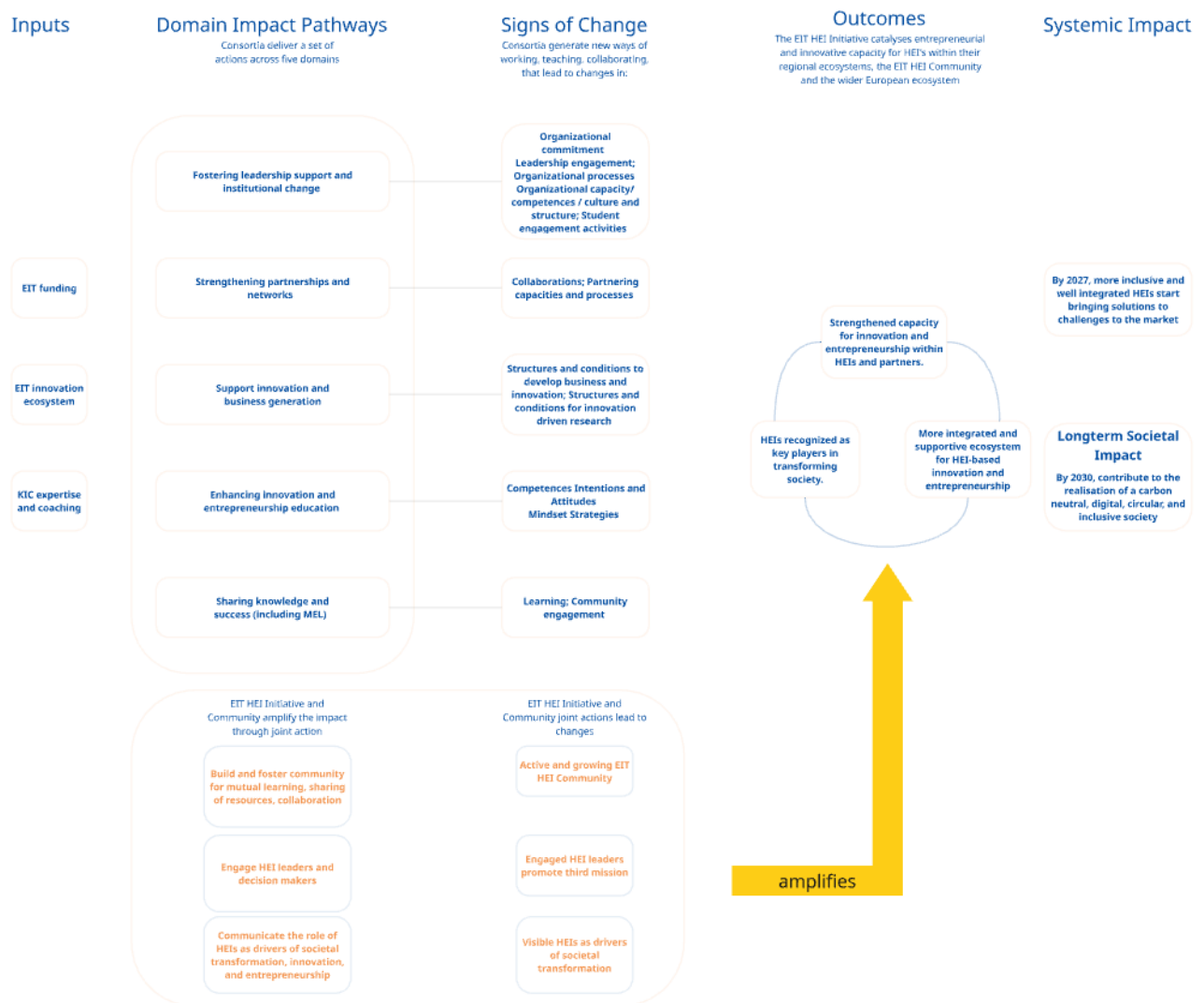


Figure 2: EIT HEI Initiative Theory of Change Overview

The EIT Higher Education Initiative is committed to assessing its impact and generating learning and lessons from its actions. The MEL framework captures all the required information needed to monitor, evaluate and learn from the programme. It facilitates strategic planning and implementation and enables adaptive management, both at the level of projects and the initiative. The MEL Framework refresh aimed to set the Initiative up for further development and amplification of impact. As a result, the present framework expands from the level of project activities to include also the Initiative-level activities that serve to deepen and widen effectiveness of the program.

### 3. MEL Framework Components

The MEL Framework is designed around the Theory of Change (ToC) of the EIT Higher Education Initiative, which aims to enable universities (HEIs) to contribute directly to new business solutions that tackle societal challenges by connecting with each other and with private sector partners around them. This approach has already been proven to work in previous cohorts. Thousands of students have been trained, hundreds of startups have emerged, and many companies have been able to innovate and adopt new technologies thanks to the projects we have funded. Amplifying the impact of the Initiative and leveraging the success of the consortia is an opportunity to showcase innovation and results, and hence bring more visibility, and to engage HEI leadership and build a shared agenda for change.

The MEL approach also serves to amplify the impact of the initiative. It directly feeds into key processes and objectives of the EIT Higher Education Initiative. Most Significant Stories and KPIs enable HEIs to communicate their success, entice their Leaders, and attract partners. At the level of the EIT Higher Education Initiative, they help to shift the perception of HEIs as drivers of innovation and entrepreneurship through strategic communication. Generating tangible outputs through cooperation at community level strengthens collaboration and a shared identity as changemakers. These dynamics help to engage HEI leaders as well as policy makers and enrol them in the agenda of the EIT Higher Education Initiative.

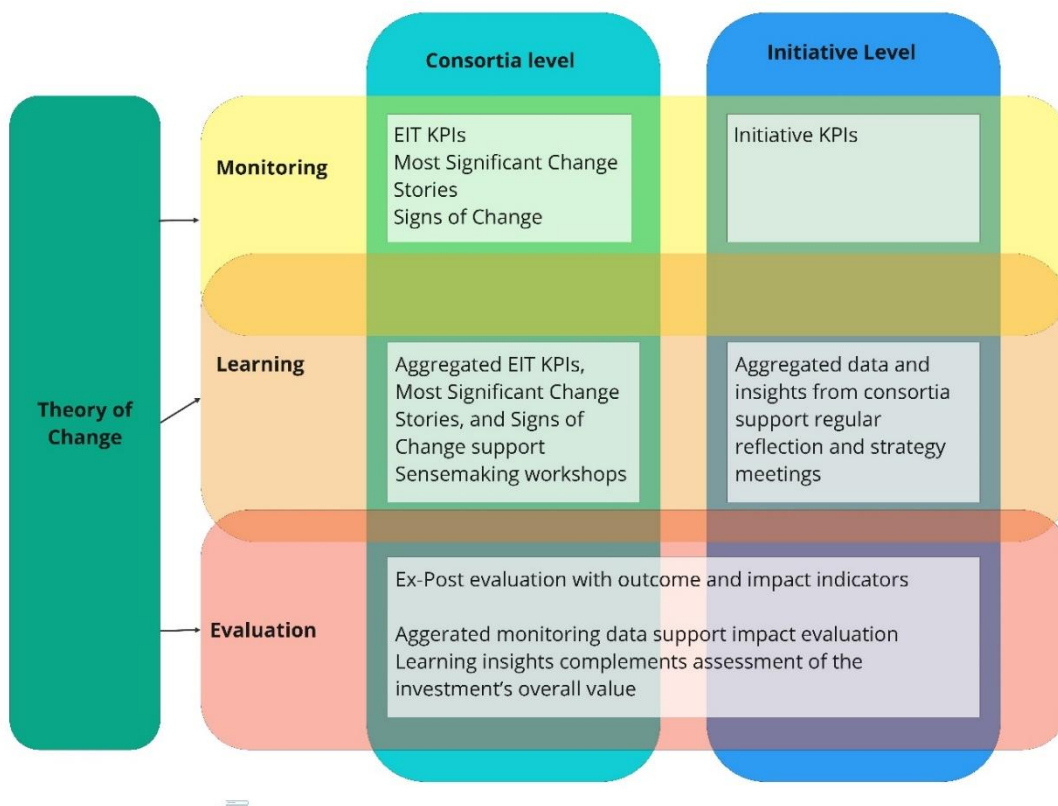


Figure 3: MEL Framework

### 3.1 Monitoring Framework

The purpose of Monitoring is to ensure Consortia are on track to create innovation and entrepreneurship and to detect any challenges and adaptive management required. EIT Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) reporting is also the main accountability mechanism for the EIT Performance reviews that are submitted annually to EIT. Consortia collect EIT KPIs (see Indicator Table in Annex 2) during reporting at end of Phase 1 and 2. These KPIs capture both outputs and outcomes of their efforts. These include the number of start-ups and scale-ups supported, participants who successfully complete education and training activities, the establishment of new or improved innovation and entrepreneurship structures in HEIs, the formation of new partnerships, and the amount of private and public capital attracted by supported start-ups and scale-ups.

Consortia also monitor changes through Most Significant Stories and Signs of Change (see Methodologies and Tools in 3.4), which is a systematic way for consortia to reflect on a range of changes that may be occurring across different Domains. Tracking change allows the complexity of social and ecological systems by allowing space for diverse expressions of progress, including those that may be unexpected, subtle, or intangible.

The objective of the initiative-level action is to track progress and undertake adaptive management of its amplifying strategies (see Chapter 2 on the ToC), namely communicating role and results; engaging HEI leadership and policymakers; and building community for shared action. These KPIs are monitored by initiative management. They are reviewed on a regular basis). The timeline can be adjusted as part of the strategy progress.

Initiative-level KPIs aims to track how well the initiative is building its community for shared action and knowledge creation. Initiative KPIs include the number or retention of community members actively involved in activities, both online and in-person, as well as the number of alumni engaged. On the knowledge creation front, Initiative KPIs track the development of guidelines, best practices, or joint publications, produced through sensemaking workshops, community events, and other collaborative moments. Consortia feedback on the support provided by the KIC or EIT Higher Education Initiative—captured through surveys at the end of Phase 1 and the final project report—serves as an essential measure of satisfaction and effectiveness. When it comes to engaging higher education leadership and policymakers, relevant initiative KPIs include the number of HEI leaders (both institutional and departmental heads) participating in activities, as well as the impact of thought leadership on HEI-based innovation and entrepreneurship. Finally, to boost visibility, KPIs could track how promising innovations and prototypes are communicated and supported—whether through competitions or workshops designed to inspire excitement and involvement. The success of these efforts can be measured by the quantity and reach of communication materials, media outreach, and the number of impactful "Most Significant Change Stories" shared on the EIT Higher Education Initiative's and HEIs' websites (see Indicator Table in Annex).

Critically, monitoring across domains and initiative—as well as tracking change through Most Significant Change stories and Signs of Change—are aggregated at the portfolio level. This aggregation not only helps track whether consortia or initiatives are implementing their planned activities but also serves to assess the impact of these actions at both the consortia and initiative levels. Monitoring, therefore, is not just about accountability—it is a means to track signals of how HEIs and their ecosystems play a key role in driving societal transformation toward a carbon-neutral, inclusive, and digital future.

## 3.2 Learning Framework

The learning framework is anchored in the desired impact outlined in the Theory of Change. It is guided by the underlying assumptions and logic of the Theory of Change, which suggests that consortia can inspire institutional change within their structures, build innovation and entrepreneurship capacity among staff, students, and partners, and foster new collaborations within their ecosystems. As a result, consortia bring innovative ideas to life through products, services, processes, or business models that contribute to societal goals. The EIT Higher Education Initiative amplifies these outcomes and strengthens the visibility of higher education institutions (HEIs) in driving societal transformation.

The learning framework provides an opportunity to learn about the impacts of the EIT High Education Initiative, to learn what works and how it works to bring about those impacts and supports the ongoing evolution of the initiative. The framework helps structure learning agenda in three key areas:

- Learning about the impact

- Learning about what works/or not
- Learning for the future evolution of the initiative

Insights and data generated through monitoring, evaluation, and learning activities feed directly into this learning framework. Learning is seen as a cumulative process, building over time to inform action, adaptation, and strategic direction.

## Learning about the Impact

**Impact on Societal Challenges:** As the ultimate goal of the ToC is for HEIs to play a key role towards a carbon-neutral, inclusive, and digital future, it is essential for the EIT Higher Education Initiative to assess the specific societal challenges HEIs and their ecosystems are contributing to, through addressing some key questions: How have these efforts contributed to broader societal transformation? What innovations have been successfully implemented, and what measurable impact have they had on critical societal issues such as sustainability, social inclusion, and economic development? These are key learning inquiries that are inherently qualitative in nature.

**Impact on Regional Ecosystem Strengthening:** The number of partnerships alone does not fully capture how HEIs participating in the initiative contribute to strengthening regional innovation ecosystems. Instead, deep dives are needed to understand the concrete actions, collaborations, and resources mobilized to enhance regional innovation capacity. This kind of in-depth insight is possible through tools and data from monitoring, learning and evaluation. These efforts are essential to assess whether the foundations for long-term sustainability of regional innovation ecosystems are being laid—extending beyond the lifetime of the initiative. This represents a critical area for learning, ensuring that the initiative delivers a lasting regional impact.

**Impact on Innovation and Knowledge Transfer:** The number of students or staff trained alone does not fully capture the depth of innovation in teaching, research, and innovation formats that have been developed, replicated, and applied across ecosystems as a result of this initiative. To generate meaningful insights, we need to look beyond participation metrics and examine how these innovations were shared, adapted, or scaled across academic, business, and policy communities. Equally important is understanding the tangible outcomes of the knowledge transfer processes enabled by the initiative. This represents a critical learning inquiry—one that can reveal how transformative change is being seeded and sustained across HEIs.

**Long-term Institutional Change & Sustainability:** Long-term institutional change within HEIs is vital for positioning these institutions to effectively address societal challenges. The learning agenda can help reveal what is being sustained—from small-scale initiatives within consortia to deeper organizational changes in structures, practices, attitudes, and investments that become embedded at the institutional level. These sustained transformations are crucial for ensuring that progress continues well beyond the life of the initiative and contribute to a broader societal transition toward a carbon-neutral, digital, circular, and inclusive future.

Importantly, different indicators within the EIT Higher Education Initiative serve distinct yet complementary functions. EIT KPIs primarily capture efforts and immediate outcomes of activities undertaken by consortia. These helps monitor

how institutional change is being initiated through specific projects and collaborations. EIT impact indicators, on the other hand, aim to assess change at the institutional level over time. They focus on how HEIs as whole entities are advancing transformation through mechanisms such as co-publications, joint investments, and strategic partnerships with research organizations and businesses. These two levels of indicators together can allow for a comprehensive benchmarking approach—one that provides insights into both the activity ecosystems (what is happening through specific projects and collaborations) and the HEI ecosystems (how institutions themselves are evolving structurally and strategically). This dual perspective is essential for capturing both the immediate outputs and the longer-term institutional shifts that underpin sustainable innovation and societal impact.

### **Learning about what works**

Two key threads are crucial for learning about what works, so the logic and assumption of the Theory of Change: first, whether and how collaboration/partnerships and communities of practice lead to greater innovation and learning; and second, whether and how new structures and incentives support HEIs in advancing their third mission. Learning events in the community of practice and sensemaking workshops serve to learn about what works, and how so.

**Effectiveness of Collaboration/Partnerships:** The EIT Higher Education Initiative is a collaborative model that brings together higher education institutions (HEIs), Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs), and non-academic sectors at various levels, including consortia, regional collaborations, Communities of Practice, and across the EU. Understanding how this collaboration model has functioned is key. Which aspects of the model have been effective in fostering cooperation, innovation, and learning? Where did challenges arise? Were there any best practices for cross-sector collaboration that emerged, and how can these practices be applied to future initiatives?

**Effectiveness of Support Structures & Incentives:** Many successful practices and structures within HEIs have flourished thanks to both HEI-HEI collaborations and partnerships with non-academic sectors. It is important to examine how these practices supported consortia and partners in reaching their objectives. What specific financial, technical, or organizational support systems were crucial for success? Additionally, what incentives and structural mechanisms—such as funding models, recognition systems, or policy frameworks—helped drive learning, collaboration, and progress throughout the initiative?

#### Learning for the Future Evolution of the Initiative

The EIT Higher Education Initiative is evolving, both because it is continuously internally learning and in response to changing socio-economic and political priorities. It is crucial for the initiative to remain future-focused, reflecting on what it can achieve in upcoming phases while responding effectively to emerging challenges.

**Future Potential & Strategic Direction:** The learning agenda should address the following questions: What potential impact could the Initiative have on the broader higher education and innovation landscape? What changes or adjustments are needed in strategy, design, or implementation to unlock this potential? How can the initiative scale its impact, building on lessons learned to maximize its effectiveness in addressing global challenges?

### 3.3 Evaluation Framework

Evaluation offers a valuable opportunity to deepen the understanding of the EIT Higher Education Initiative's Theory of Change, engage in collective sensemaking, and refine future strategies. By drawing on data from the initiative's monitoring and learning tools, evaluation enables a critical and constructive assessment of the investment's overall value. Given the initiative's complexity and its dynamic environment, a generative and developmental evaluation approach is especially appropriate. It supports continuous learning, fosters meaningful dialogue, and encourages appreciation of progress and innovation across all levels of implementation.

Evaluation is also a critical moment to synthesize diverse sources of evidence from the initiative's monitoring and learning systems, while deliberately collecting additional data on outcome and impact indicators. These outcome indicators provide complementary insights alongside key performance indicators (KPIs).

Some outcome indicators aggregate real-time data on the quality and extent of institutional change, using tools such as Most Significant Change Stories and Signs of Change. These sources help capture dynamic shifts within HEIs and their ecosystems. Other outcome indicators require more in-depth exploration using case studies and targeted surveys to be fully understood. These methods are particularly valuable in assessing the quality of HEI-based ecosystem integration, using RIIA indicators such as the development of social ties, contributions to regional innovation systems, and the capacity to attract investment. Surveys are also used to assess how HEIs are perceived as agents of societal transformation, providing key insights into how the initiative is influencing broader systems and stakeholder perceptions.

Beyond short- to medium-term outcomes, the evaluation also focuses on impact indicators—which help illuminate the initiative's long-term contributions. The impact indicators look for signs of sustained impact—shifting from project-level activities within consortia to institutionalized practices embedded within HEIs. These sustained outputs, reflected in co-authored publications, long-term investments, and durable partnerships, help to identify what endures beyond the life of the initiative. Understanding these long-term shifts is critical, as they shape how HEIs will continue to contribute meaningfully to tackling global and societal challenges in the future.

### 3.4 Methodology and tools for monitoring, learning and evaluation

#### HEInnovate

HEInnovate is a well-established tool to guide HEIs on their journey to becoming an entrepreneurial, innovative institution. The short survey is used at the beginning and at the end of the project by consortia to review the position and progress of the HEI. HEIs conduct the survey individually. The project partner within the HEI is encouraged to align the responses with relevant HEI leader/s, for example the Head of Department. The first HEInnovate self-assessment helps to know which actions are relevant for the HEI, to identify areas where they can learn from each other and where they want to advance collectively. Each HEI defines some target achievements within the HEInnovate framework that will inform the development of the IVAP. An end of Phase 1 self-assessment at HEI level is a voluntary option. This helps project partners at HEIs to reflect on their progress and update their aspirations. At end of Phase 2, HEIs undertake a final HEInnovate self-assessment to understand their progress through the project,

again at HEI level between project partners at HEI with relevant HEI leader/s. Insights from the HEInnovate are documented and shared in the final report, including additional capabilities per each of the 8 areas it has gained at HEI.

#### Innovation-Vision-Action-Plan (IVAP)

The Innovation-Vision-Action-Plan (IVAP) is the key tool used by consortia to design and track learning along the project journey. The IVAP defines the objectives of consortia members and how they aim to achieve them, including concrete actions. It also defines target KPIs (and thus informs the performance monitoring). After designing the IVAP initially, a facilitated workshop is organised by KIC and consortia to review it at mid-term, after conducting the (possibly with inspiration of the voluntary HEInnovate, assessment) to reflect on progress and, if needed, make any changes. After phase 1 and at end of phase 2, consortia reflect on the effectiveness of the actions and approach, extract relevant insights for others (good practices, success factors) and provide feedback to the HEI Initiative. IVAP assessments also include sharing feedback on KIC/EIT Higher Education Initiative support to consortia, the IVAP may be updated in correspondence with learnings from phase 1 and to guide the ensuing phase 2.

#### Most Significant Change Stories and Signs of Change

Most Significant Stories provide a structured way for consortia to reflect on the range of changes taking place across different domains. These stories serve both as a monitoring tool and as a learning mechanism, allowing change to be evidenced, tracked, and thoughtfully explored. They also support learning by encouraging teams to notice and reflect on emerging patterns of change—without prescribing what change must look like. This approach honours the complexity of social and ecological systems by creating space for diverse, often unexpected, expressions of progress, including those that may be subtle or intangible.

Most Significant Stories allow partners within a consortium to document and share key outcomes and successes from their projects. The stories can focus on any element of the Institutional Value and Action Plan and may be written either as a single story representing the entire consortium or as individual stories contributed by each higher education institution. Each consortium decides whether to submit a collective story or a set of institutional stories reflecting the changes at the partner level.

Stories are encouraged to be written in clear, non-technical language and provide sufficient context about the observed changes and their significance. The story of change should prompt reflection on what enabled this success and how it can be sustained into the future. If developed at the consortium level, stories may take the form of a “Narrative with Numbers”, combining key performance indicators from the European Institute of Innovation and Technology with contextual storytelling to offer a deeper understanding of meaningful progress.

Most Significant Stories are supported by Signs of Change, which serve as both inspiration and a practical reference for drafting a story of change. These signs offer a tangible way to identify and describe emerging changes, helping teams frame their reflections.

Consortia are also asked to evaluate and assign a Stage of Change score to each domain's Signs of Change, using a four-point gradient that reflects the degree of observable transformation: 0 – No signs of change; 1 – Some early signs of change, 2 – Tentative signs of change, 3 – Clear signs of change.

These scores are used to identify where a consortium is exerting the most influence across the five core domains. The data collected is then aggregated by the MEL team across the full cohort, supporting cross-consortia learning, shared insight, and strategic reflection on where and how the initiative is creating the most value. This data also contributes to the aggregation of selected outcome indicators, strengthening the evidence base for the initiative's overall impact.

#### Sensemaking workshops

Sensemaking and Learning: "So what" – what does the evidence tell us about the initiative as a whole? Sensemaking forms the core link between project level evidence generated through impact monitoring and the evidence learning that it generates at the initiative level. Sensemaking refers to a structured approach for linking data analysis, insights, and synthesis into to produce intelligence that enables decision making. As such, sensemaking is central to the delivery of EIT HEI Initiative. In practical terms sensemaking is about creating "sense" and extracting insights and patterns from project data and evidence sources to enable us to answer the "so what" question.

Sensemaking sessions (workshops) will take place on regular basis during phase 2 to collect, reflect and analyse initiative level evidence. They also provide space to reflect on outcomes and generate recommendations for the Initiative on how to best support projects. The result of this exercise will be captured in the Initiative level Sensemaking insight report. Sensemaking will involve both KICs HEI Project officers and partners

#### Indicator frameworks

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) are collected by individual consortia and then aggregated by the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) team. In parallel, the initiative also tracks its own set of KPIs as part of broader monitoring efforts. Outcome and impact indicators, guided by RIA2 framework, are primarily gathered through evaluation activities.

Together, these data streams—spanning both quantitative and qualitative dimensions—create a robust evidence base. This comprehensive dataset supports collective sense-making around the EIT Higher Education Initiative's Theory of Change, enabling deeper insights into how change happens and where strategic adjustments may be needed.

#### Survey

A dedicated survey will be conducted with a range of stakeholders—including HEI partners, institutional leaders, non-academic collaborators, and external actors such as regional and local governments, funders, and investors as part of the evaluation framework. This will assess perceptions of the initiative's influence across its three outcome areas.

#### Learning exchanges

Community events are regularly organized by the EIT Higher Education Community. These learning exchanges provide valuable opportunities to spotlight good practices, deepen shared understanding, and co-create joint knowledge resources. They also serve as spaces for peer learning and exchange, helping to strengthen the collective capacity of the community.

#### Initiative Level Project Management Team meeting

In addition to formal MEL processes, learning also occurs informally and consistently through other channels. These include bi-weekly online reflection meetings and an annual Project Management Cross KIC Team meeting—hosted by EIT RawMaterials—which offers a dedicated space to reflect on the initiative’s overall design, processes, and emerging outcomes. Together, these moments foster a culture of continuous learning, improvement, and strategic adaptation across the initiative.

Data and insights from MEL activities—such as project-level and initiative-level key performance indicators, end-of-phase reports (Phase 1 and Phase 2), and findings from sense-making workshops—play a central role in informing the evolution of the initiative. These learning inputs help the initiative regularly update and refine its approach, ensuring it remains adaptive and responsive to emerging challenges and opportunities.

## 4. MEL System

The MEL System should be seen as a continuous process of learning and improvement that is embedded across the EIT Higher Education Initiative. The Consortia are responsible for implementing the MEL process in their projects. The MEL team guides the process, ensures quality and organizes learning events. The project coordinator, based in a KIC, provides support and extracts insights. In particular, good practices are shared with the community via Community Platform and Learning Events. Most Significant Change Stories are reviewed and shared with the Communication team. The regular evaluation takes the learning to a higher level, looking at how the Initiative evolves.

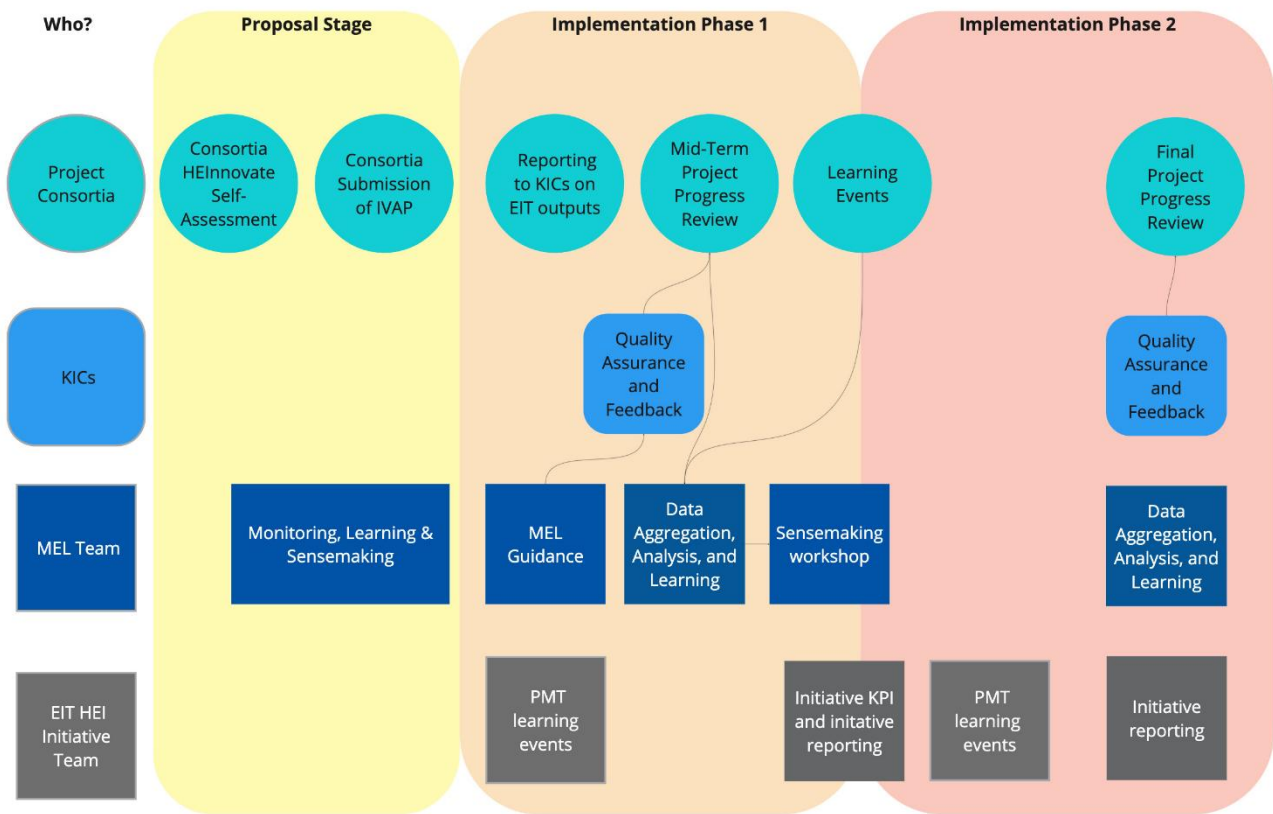


Figure 4: MEL System

## 4.1 MEL Roles and Responsibilities

The different actors in the EIT Higher Education Initiative have different roles and responsibilities within the MEL process. The objective is to create an inspiring and effective learning flow. Activities should be perceived as meaningful and valuable. Ongoing dialogue can invigorate this momentum, identify where it gets stuck and resolve tensions and tick-box attitudes.

### Project consortia

- HEInnovate assessment (at HEI level and joint review)
- Participation in Initiative-wide sensemaking and learning activities
- Data collection, analysis and reporting in line with Initiative’s MEL framework and reporting templates
- EIT KPI reporting as part of the phase 1 review and project reporting at the end of phase 2

- Feedback to the EIT Higher Education Initiative at the end of phase 1 and final review at the end of phase 2 along a standard questionnaire
- Creation and communication of Most Significant Story at HEI or Consortia level, in alignment with partner- and initiative-level communication

#### KICs Project Officers:

- Ensure projects' reporting compliance with the established MEL framework
- Quality assurance of project level reports
- Ensure timely delivery of project reports to Initiative Coordinator

#### MEL team:

- Responsible for the design of the EIT Higher Education Initiative MEL framework
- Designing Most Significant Stories template
- Responsible for communicating MEL approach and results
- Responsible for implementing the MEL approach Support the Project Coordinator in the design of the Project Progress Review Templates
- Aggregate project-level data analysis and insight reporting
- Design, coordinate and implement sensemaking workshops
- Lead/support evaluation and provide relevant data

#### Initiative Coordinator/Management:

- Leadership and strategic direction-setting for the MEL across the KICs and external MEL reporting to funders and other key stakeholders in collaboration with MEL team
- Support MEL team aggregate project-level data and analysis at the initiative level
- Support evaluation process and provide relevant data during evaluation, with support from broader EIT HEI team

## 4.2 Timeline

The timeline below serves as a guide for Consortia on critical activities and touchpoints along the project.

Project life cycle	Activity	Roles
<b>Project start</b>	Set up MEL processes	Consortia, led by coordinator, put measurement and learning processes on place Project Officer provides guidance MEL Team conducts a Webinar
<b>End of phase 1</b>	Phase 1 project review Consortia submit phase 1 report including: EIT KPIs MSC Story and other evaluative questions	Projects consortia develop report Project officers assure quality
<b>Phase 2</b>	Initiative-level report  Initiative-level progress report Aggregate KPI reporting and Initiative level KPIs. Aggregated Insights Report	MEL Team Initiative Management
	Impact and learning annual event/s Initiative team reflects on progress and learning and adjusts approach accordingly	Initiative Management coordinates EIT KICs and MEL Team provides inputs and participates
	Sensemaking workshop	MEL designs and facilitates. Project officers provide inputs.

	<p>Consortia reflect and learn from shared experiences and challenges, they jointly develop concrete follow-up actions, exchange on good practices</p>	<p>Community officer ensures good practices are shared via the Community platform EIT KICs and Initiative Management provide inputs as needed Projects provide inputs as core of Sensemaking.</p>
<b>End of project</b>	<p>Final reflection Each HEI conducts HEInnovate and notes additional capabilities Consortia convene to reflect on progress and learnings and explore next steps</p>	<p>Consortia Lead Project officers provide guidance on process</p>
	<p>Final project report Consortia report on EIT KPIs Stage of change, MSC Story and other evaluative questions Learnings and Feedback</p>	<p>Consortia develop the report Project officers guide MEL team aggregates the results and extracts key insights and recommendations for the initiative</p>
	<p>Initiative Insights Report Initiative-level progress report</p> <p>Aggregate KPI reporting and Initiative level KPIs. Learning insights</p>	<p>MEL Team Initiative Management</p>
<b>As per EIT request during project implementation</b>	<p>EIT Performance and Financial Reporting</p>	<p>All</p>

## Annex 1: Theory of Change full narrative

The proposed refreshed Theory of Change builds on the strong foundations of the EIT Higher Education Initiative and focuses on how to amplify its impact, specifically through actions at the initiative level.

The "engine" that drives innovation and entrepreneurship for societal transformation is the consortia, implementing actions along the five domains that connect with each other. Their impact is amplified through actions at initiative level, in particular around communication, leadership engagement and community building. Signs of change appear at four levels: on the level HEIs as well as regional ecosystem as a result of consortia actions; on the level of the EIT Higher Education Initiative community through the community activities, and on the wider European ecosystem through the Initiative as a whole. Three broad outcomes are generated: stronger innovation and entrepreneurship capacities of HEIs and partners; an integrated supportive ecosystem at regional, community and European level, and HEIs being strongly positioned as drivers of innovation. Ultimately, HEI-based innovation and entrepreneurship contributes significantly to a carbon-neutral, digital, circular and inclusive society.

While the basic approach at the level of consortium projects remains intact, the five domains can, in the future, also guide actions at the level of the initiative itself.

The table below summarizes actions at project and initiative level. The blue shaded boxes indicate leverage points, where the Initiative should put special emphasis on in the future. (Domain names have been adjusted slightly for clarity and consistency.)

Action Domain / Who leads?	HEI/ Consortium	Initiative
(1) Fostering leadership support and institutional change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Secure and maintain institutional engagement for the implementation of the IVAP, especially among HEI leadership and its strategy</li> <li>Enhance the scale and scope of student engagement activities, including improving student support offices to advise on entrepreneurship and innovation.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Advocating for leadership and policy support</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Engage HEI leaders in dialogue</i></li> <li><i>Establish leadership circles and/or initiatives</i></li> <li><i>Share good practices related to institutional change with leaders</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Advocate for conducive HEI policies among EU policy makers</i></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infrastructure development (incl. digital infrastructure).</li> <li>• Develop inter- and multi-disciplinary support, incentive and collaboration structures (including digital infrastructure) to foster innovation.</li> </ul>	
(2) Strengthening partnerships and networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish new collaborations and enhance the nature, content and types of collaborations with external partners, including businesses, research organisations, governmental bodies, NGOs and other societal partners.</li> </ul> <p>Build partnering capacities among staff and facilitate networking and connections with partners.</p>	<p><i>Building community for shared action</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Connect and match-make partners for proposals (input)</i></li> <li>• <i>Enable collaboration and connection across the community, e.g. through events, dialogue platforms or shared infrastructure</i></li> <li>• <i>Support networks of community members on a sustainable basis</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Engage relevant players that can strengthen the network as a whole, such as other European I&amp;E initiatives or funders</i></p>
(3) Supporting Innovation and Business generation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and utilize structures and conditions for people to create or develop their businesses and start-ups, and to transfer technology</li> <li>• Create structures and conditions for innovation-driven research.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Share good practices and tools for innovation and business development within the community and beyond</i></p>

<p>(4) Enhancing innovation and entrepreneurship education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop or improve the innovation and entrepreneurial curricula.</li> <li>• Develop innovation and entrepreneurial training programs and mentoring schemes for staff and students.</li> <li>• Organise internships in businesses.</li> <li>• Provide up-skilling opportunities to businesses, especially SMEs.</li> <li>• Assessment of teaching and learning practices</li> </ul>	<p><i>Share good practices (for innovation and entrepreneurship education with the community and beyond</i></p>
<p>(5) Sharing knowledge and success (including MEL)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collect and share success stories and lessons with others</li> <li>• Engage in joint activities with other EIT HEI Initiative project partners via the EIT HEI community</li> </ul>	<p><i>Communicating role and results</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Support projects in MEL (input)</i></li> <li>• <i>Aggregate progress and changes</i></li> <li>• <i>Reflect on learnings with the community</i></li> <li>• <i>Communicate results within the community and with leadership and policy makers</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Place results and messages in media, events and wider discourse</i></p>

Table 1: Actions along the five Domains for projects as well as the initiative

With these actions by projects and at initiative level, the EIT Higher Education Initiative can aspire to change outcomes at four levels: (1) the HEI and consortia, (2) their respective regional ecosystems, (3) the EIT Higher Education Community and (4) the wider innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem in Europe. While outcomes are not depicted as linked in a linear way, they do influence each other across those levels.

HEI/ Consortium level: Signs of change	HEI's regional ecosystems	EIT HEI Community	Wider Ecosystem
<p>Domain 1: Institutional Culture and Structures: Committed HEI leadership; new or improved organisational processes; infrastructure; strategies and human resources that enable collaboration and support innovation and entrepreneurial education</p> <p>Domain 2: Innovation Ecosystem: New actors, networks, and collaborations foster innovation and the creation of businesses within the EU HEIs that address societal challenges</p> <p>Domain 3: Supporting Innovation and Business Generation: Changes in the conditions and structures including innovation and collaboration opportunities to empower people to transform their ideas and societal value into business ideas and innovative practices, products and services</p>	<p>HEIs are better integrated into regional innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystems. They continue building new regional partnerships.</p> <p>Partnerships last beyond the project lifetime and deepen further</p> <p>HEIs act as capacity providers for innovation and entrepreneurship (beyond the project timeline)</p> <p>HEIs are visible and credible as drivers of societal transformation</p> <p>HEIs contribute to collective learning in their region and communicate successes on innovation and entrepreneurship activities with regional actors</p>	<p>HEIs across the Community and Europe have a strengthened entrepreneurial and innovating capacity</p> <p>A strong community of practice evolves, facilitating matchmaking between partners, shared activities and adoption of good practices</p> <p>Shared resources and knowledge exchange facilitate the development of high-end innovation and entrepreneurship activities and education</p> <p>HEIs, supported by action of the EIT HEI Initiative, communicate their successes on purpose-driven innovation collectively. Synthesized results document the success of the initiative as a whole</p> <p>Visible successes showcase HEIs in their role as drivers of innovation and entrepreneurship.</p>	<p>HEIs are visible as drivers of purpose-driven innovation and entrepreneurship responding to emerging societal needs.</p> <p>Actors from the wider ecosystem engage with the EIT HEI Initiative and community partners to tap into and enrich existing resources and networks.</p> <p>Students and staff aspire to engage in innovation projects and contribute to societal transformation</p> <p>Policy makers recognize the relevance of HEIs for innovation and entrepreneurship for societal transformation.</p> <p>Supported by the EIT HEI Initiative and</p>

<p>Domain 4: Peoples Entrepreneurial Culture and Competencies: Staff and students supporting innovation that addresses societal challenges</p> <p>Domain 5: Knowledge and Evidence: Consortia identify and share good practices; they use MEL strategically to improve their performance</p>		<p>This empowers advocacy efforts by the EIT HEI Initiative to create more innovation-conducive policy frameworks and incentives for HEIs.</p>	<p>Community, they advocate for innovation-conducive policies and incentives for HEIs</p>
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Table 2: Signs of change by level of influence

Consortium level. The EIT Higher Education Initiative supports collaborative innovation and entrepreneurship programs that bring together HEIs, research institutes and implementing organizations (companies, NGOs, welfare organizations, public sector). Projects are designed to start an upward spiral of innovation and entrepreneurship for societal transformation (towards carbon-neutral, circular, digital and inclusive societies):

- By becoming part of the EIT Higher Education Initiative, Innovation and entrepreneurship get a boost on the HEI's internal agendas (Domain 1)
- With internal commitment and support, HEIs set out to collaborate with partners within their consortium and regional ecosystems (Domain 2)
- More innovative and entrepreneurial students, staff, and partners generate purpose-driven and competitive innovations on all levels from new products, business ideas, and processes (increasing competitiveness, growth, job creation) (Domain 3)
- Jointly created innovation and entrepreneurship education upskills and motivates students, staff, and partners (Domain 4)
- Joint innovation, successes, and learnings boost the visibility of HEIs as drivers of innovation and enables wide-spread communication. This, in turn, motivates leadership to keep supporting innovation and entrepreneurship activities. (Domain 5)

In each project a virtuous circle unfolds within the Knowledge Triangle: the ecosystem expands, more partners connect with the HEIs and are aware of HEIs' capacities. Dialogue within the Triangle enables better synchronization of activities. HEIs integrate more and more into their innovation ecosystem, and the ease and rate of success of innovations increases. This virtuous circle ultimately enables economic growth, job creation and competitiveness while enabling societal transformation in terms of carbon-neutral, circular, digital and inclusive societies. Each consortium is supported by a specialized KIC on their way toward purpose-driven innovation for societal goals.

The EIT Higher Education Initiative supports projects (on consortia level) with several inputs:

- Funding: projects receive grants.
- Match-Making: The initiative enables HEIs and other partners to connect on its platform in order to develop joint proposals. More advanced HEIs are encouraged to collaborate with less advanced players as a means of transferring knowledge.
- Coaching and MEL: They benefit from best practices of other projects and show cases from the KICs. During implementation, they receive support in creation of their IVAPs, support in implementation of the project, guidance on how to monitor change, communicate their success, sensemaking, and are engaged in knowledge exchange activities with peers.

The activities are, for the most part, already happening and appreciated highly by projects. Giving them greater strategic relevance will enable greater focus. This is one way to amplify impact of the Initiative and also work towards sustainability: by purposefully building skills among HEIs, this can become a valuable body of know-how and infrastructure even beyond the lifetime of the Initiative.

#### EIT Higher Education Community and wider Ecosystem

The EIT Higher Education Initiative is well positioned to change the perception of HEIs as drivers of innovation and entrepreneurship for societal transformation and, thus, change incentive structures. The first three actions below are particularly important and should be led by the EIT Higher Education Initiative team, leveraging partners and the community where possible. Creation of good practices and shared tools (actions four and five below) can happen as part of the community work, led by partners but enabled through engagement processes and incentives by the EIT Higher Education Initiative.

- Communicate the role of HEIs as drivers of innovation and entrepreneurship (Domain 5): By telling the success stories, sharing results, and highlighting the voices of leaders, the EIT Higher Education Initiative can capitalize on its projects to change the perception of HEIs among HEI leadership, policy makers, partner organizations, HEI staff and students and the wider public. This mindset change will make collaboration with ecosystem partners easier, encourage participation at all levels in innovation and entrepreneurship activities, and ultimately support project success. Communication can build strongly on MEL activities, which should be designed as a shared activity and learning process. For example, partners can co-create insights, including through scientific papers.
- Advocate for innovation and entrepreneurship among HEI leaders and policy makers (Domain 1): Based on the evidence of success, the EIT Higher Education Initiative can engage HEI leaders and policy makers in a dialogue around the role of HEIs, show the relevance of innovation and entrepreneurship activities, and show how changed incentives drive better outcomes, including, ultimately, for societal transformation, competitiveness and economic growth.
- Build community around how to enable innovation and entrepreneurship at HEIs (Domain 2): By curating a community of contributors across the Knowledge Triangle, and beyond the EIT Higher Education Initiative can strengthen collaboration. This also includes activities around domains education and innovation and business development.

- Create and share education good practices (Domain 4): Initiative partners create shared resources for education, including curricula, tools, and frameworks.
- Create and share innovation and business development good practices (Domain 3): share and document good practices, collaborate around test beds.

These activities are mutually supportive. All five will benefit from engaging the community as well as collaborating with other actors in the HEI innovation and entrepreneurship space, e.g. University Alliances, UNITAR etc. They can be augmented at the level of the wider ecosystem, by communicating success, engaging in policy dialogue, engaging HEI leaders and other innovation and entrepreneurship initiatives, and making tools and infrastructure widely available. In this way, the EIT Higher Education Initiative can amplify its consortium-level activities whilst creating a stronger ecosystem and hence better chances for success across the European landscape.

## Annex 2: EIT Higher Education Initiative Indicator Framework

Annex 3 presents the HEI Initiative Indicator Framework. As highlighted in the section 4.1, EIT Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) reporting is also the main accountability mechanism for the EIT Performance reviews that are submitted annually to EIT. Consortia collect EIT KPIs during reporting at end of Phase 1 and 2. These KPIs capture both outputs and outcomes of their efforts. These include the number of start-ups and scale-ups supported, participants who successfully complete education and training activities, the establishment of new or improved innovation and entrepreneurship structures in HEIs, the formation of new partnerships, and the amount of private and public capital attracted by supported start-ups and scale-ups. The EIT KPIs are in [marked in blue](#) in the EIT Higher Education Initiative Indicator table below. More details on those specific indicators [here](#).

EIT Ref.	Level	Indicator	Definition	Modes of Verification	Assumptions/Risks
Impact <sup>1</sup>		By 2027, more inclusive and well-integrated HEIs will bring solutions to challenges to the market. By 2030, the EIT Higher Education Initiative expects HEIs to contribute significantly to a carbon-neutral, digital, circular and inclusive society through innovation and entrepreneurship.			
	Impact indicator 1	[number of] co-publications between HEIs, research organisations and business partners addressing the transformation toward a carbon neutral, digital, circular, and inclusive society	Relevant co-publications are defined as being co-published with an HEI and start-ups, businesses, and research organisations, explicitly addressing pertinent developments, practices, challenges, technologies or other means of driving the transformation toward a carbon neutral, digital, circular, and inclusive society.	Survey and/or interviews as part of ex-post evaluation	Collecting impact indicators via surveys/interviews at the evaluation stage include respondent willingness, accurate recall, understanding of questions, and data integrity. Risks include non-response or low participation, sampling bias, recall bias, data misinterpretation, confounding factors, and over-reliance on self-reported data. There is also a risk of interview/survey

<sup>1</sup> Impact indicators are collected at the level of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), using sampling methods when necessary. These HEI indicators are compared to a pre-established baseline to assess changes over time against agreed benchmarks. This process helps to understand the evolution of HEIs in driving societal transformation and collectively 'sensemake' some of the contribution made by the EIT Higher Education Initiative to that evolution.

	Impact indicator 2	[number of] active collaborations between HEIs, research organisations and business partners driving innovation and entrepreneurship toward a carbon neutral, digital, circular, and inclusive society	Collaborations are defined as an ongoing or past process of knowledge building in which organisations (HEIs with business partners and/or research organisations) work together towards clear objectives, jointly contributing to drive the societal transformation towards a carbon neutral, digital, circular, and inclusive society.		<p>fatigue and lack of baseline data for comparison.</p> <p>Mitigation strategies include clear, simple questions, triangulation of data, random sampling, using Alumni Community, and combining qualitative and quantitative methods to enhance reliability and reduce bias.</p>
	Impact indicator 3	a) amount of capital raised, b) annual revenue, c) jobs created by start-ups and businesses collaborating with HEIs and research organisations to drive the transformation toward a carbon neutral, digital, circular, and inclusive society	<p>a) Amount of Capital Raised: Total financial investment secured by start-ups and businesses, from various sources, to support growth and innovation.</p> <p>b) Annual Revenue: The total income generated by start-ups and businesses in a given year from their operations, before expenses.</p> <p>c) Jobs Created: The number of new employment opportunities generated by start-ups and businesses through collaborations with</p>		

			HEIs and research organizations focused on sustainability and societal transformation.		
Outcome 1		Strengthened capacity for innovation and entrepreneurship within HEIs and partners			
	Outcome indicator 1.1	Quality and extent of institutional change and engagement	<p>Capabilities being developed by HEIs</p> <p>Capabilities here are explored through the Most Significant Stories rather than pre-defined</p>	<p>Reported additional capabilities of HEIs, identified through the analysis of Most Significant Stories and Signs of Change, can support tracking institutional change and engagement by domains.</p> <p>A narrative by number would accompany each of these reported additional capabilities.</p>	<p>We assume here that the additional capabilities being developed by HEI are captured by the methodology of Most Significant Stories and Signs of Change.</p> <p>Without a numbered narrative accompanying each reported additional capability, the exercise risks becoming merely a reporting and accountability task. A narrative-by-number approach, undertaken with the EIT Higher Education Initiative, could help frame it as an evidence-based learning harvest—capturing how the initiative supports HEIs in becoming more entrepreneurial, including the enabling and inhibiting conditions.</p>

	Outcome indicator 1.2	Perception of improvements of capacity for innovation and entrepreneurship	Here capacity for innovation and entrepreneurship are Vision and Mission commitment to third mission; Effective governance and incentives. <sup>2</sup>	Survey  Administering a post-then-pre survey. The survey will include both quantitative and qualitative questions to assess perceived changes in skills and capabilities. Open-ended questions will allow respondents to provide detailed feedback on specific improvements or challenges.	We assume here that perception is a good proxy to assessing improvements of capacity for innovation and entrepreneurship in the four key ecosystems (HEI, regional, EIT initiative and wider ecosystems)  However, there is a risk that results will depend also on who is surveyed and the ecosystem surveyed, which will need to be considered in the survey. Mitigation strategies depend on active Alumni Community.
EITHE08.1	Output <sup>3</sup> indicator 1.1 (Consortium Level)  Domain: Enhancing innovation and	Number of successful participants in EIT professional development courses, online training courses and other education/training activities delivered or in a process of delivery  Number of successful participants in additional mentoring related to the training programmes	... (by country and type of programme), including data on country of citizenship and gender. Only participants, who successfully finished the programme, will be counted. For this KPI, only those education and training activities which have clearly defined learning outcomes, and	Data harvested as part of project activities by project consortia, and aggregated by MEL Team  Initiative indicators are collected by EIT HEI Initiative	The number of students reached does not necessarily reveal the impact of training on students.  Similarly, the number of structures or mechanisms established does not guarantee long-lasting integration within HEIs.

<sup>2</sup> Capacity for innovation could involve capacity in:

1. This includes involvement of HEI senior leadership, programmatic capacity for innovation and entrepreneurship, long-term commitment, and the commitment of financial resources to enable the third mission and focus in HEI on socio-environmental and economic challenges
2. Effective governance and incentives. This includes supportive roles and structures within HEIs for industry collaboration, Adequate reward system in universities for collaboration., Cross-departmental and interdisciplinary collaboration

<sup>3</sup> As output indicators, they are measurable, tangible results of projects activities

	entrepreneurship education		<p>which carries out competency assessment method are applicable.</p> <p>Structured data for the KPI:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Year of reporting</li> <li>▪ Title of course/training/ education activity delivered</li> <li>▪ Type of the programme</li> <li>▪ Key learning outcomes, competencies, assessment method and results of the programme</li> <li>▪ Number of participants enrolled in the reporting year (and breakdown of participants by country of origin)</li> </ul>		<p>However, they indicate efforts of activities. When complemented with a perception survey on capacity being developed and embedded within HEI, together they can complement efforts and impacts</p>
EITHE19.1	<p>Output indicator 1.2 (Consortium Level)</p> <p>Domain: Fostering leadership support and institutional change</p>	<p>Number of new and/or improved support structures and mechanisms established within or mobilized by the HEIs participating in the EIT HEI Building Initiative</p>	<p>...with an objective to support innovation and / or entrepreneurship. For example, the following structures and mechanisms will be considered: innovation testbeds, units, programmes, spaces, infrastructures, etc. KICs will need to gather the lists of structures and mechanisms from the participating institutions and provide them to EIT together with explanations as to how the EIT HEI Initiative has</p>		

			<p>contributed to establishing, improving and/or mobilizing these structures.</p> <p>Structured data for the KPI:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Year of reporting</li> <li>▪ Higher education institutions involved</li> <li>▪ Countries where these structures were established incl. RIS countries</li> <li>▪ Description of the diversity and inclusion focus of the support structure/mechanism</li> </ul>	
	Output indicator 1.3 (Initiative Level)	Number of interventions assessed	The total count of specific actions related to the Initiative that have been assessed, to measure their effectiveness in supporting innovation and entrepreneurship.	
Outcome 2		Integrated and supportive ecosystem for HEI-based innovation and entrepreneurship		

	Outcome indicator 2.1	Quality of integration of HEI-based ecosystem, using regional analysis	<p>Linkages and collaborations between the HEI and other public, private and non-profit actors, specifically around innovation and entrepreneurship for carbon-neutral, digital, circular and inclusive societies.</p> <p>These linkages and collaborations, which define the quality of integration, include co-investment, collaboration in research and development, the creation of joint agendas, the sharing of facilities and spaces, and the production of joint publications between higher education institutions (HEIs) and non-academic partners.</p>	Using a sample of regions, case studies using a narrative with numbers approach can zoom into different aspects of integration including some of RIIA indicators (qualitative) <sup>4</sup>	We assume that the only way to assess integrated and supportive ecosystem is through qualitative information on a number of criteria. We assume that there is no direct simple quantitative metric.
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<sup>4</sup> RIIA indicators (qualitative)

- Formation of social ties and networks with local/regional stakeholders and partners
- Contributions to the creation of a local/regional entrepreneurial ecosystem
- Contribution to embedding the regional innovation system in international R&D networks (international co-publications; participation in international research projects; attraction of foreign staff)
- Contribution to the investment climate (attraction of private investments in the region e.g. by foreign or national firms)
- Joint agenda setting with regional partners
- Shared R&D facilities with local/regional industry
- Investments of industry or public sector partners

	Outcome indicator 2.2	Perception of stronger regional integration	Survey results on how ecosystem stakeholders perceive the capability of the HEI to collaborate on innovation and entrepreneurship, actual collaboration opportunities and performance within collaboration	<p>As part of the stakeholder survey, ask how respondents perceive the following on a scale, with free text space for comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ capability of the HEI to collaborate on innovation and entrepreneurship</li> <li>▪ actual collaboration opportunities</li> <li>▪ performance within collaboration</li> </ul>	However, there is a risk that results will depend also on who is surveyed and the ecosystem surveyed, which will need to be considered in the survey. Mitigation through Alumni Community.
EITHEI20	Output indicator 2.1 (Consortium Level)  Domain: Strengthening partnerships and networks	New partnerships established by participating HEIs and businesses, research organisations, other actors	<p>Number (#) of new partnerships established as a result of the EIT HEI Initiative:</p> <p>Structured data for the KPI:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Year of reporting</li> <li>▪ Organisations involved in these partnerships</li> <li>▪ Nature of the new partnership (contract, agreement, informal cooperation, etc.), including roles of different partners</li> <li>▪ Countries of the organisations involved. Of them: RIS countries.</li> </ul>	Partnership agreements	Not all partnerships may be formalized, especially given heavy HEI admin. Informal Letters of Intent can also be used.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Number of organisations from RIS countries</li> <li>▪ If the organisation participates in other KICs activities: yes/no.</li> </ul>		
	Output indicator 2.2 (Initiative Level)	Consortia's satisfaction with and feedback on KIC/EIT HEI Initiative support role – <i>via consolidating project feedback (end of Phase 1 and end of project)</i>	How do consortia perceive the support by KIC/EIT HEI Initiative?	Feedback provided on KIC/EIT HEI Initiative support as part of mid-term and final reports of Consortia. Ideally, satisfaction is operationalized on a scale so that averages are possible for consolidation.	Feedback may be strategic and more positive than is actually the case. Need incentives or prompts for candour.
	Output indicator 2.3 (Initiative Level)	Leadership engagement via: Number of HEI Leaders (HEI or department heads) engaged in activities Number of thought leadership on HEI-based innovation and entrepreneurship	HEI Leaders engaged in EIT HEI Initiative activities	Counting participants in events and collaborators in joint initiatives	Participation may not correlate with active support.
	Output indicator 2.4 (Initiative Level)	Community engagement via: Number of Alumni community members engaged Promotional, networking, thematic or learning activities organised	How active is the community in contributing to shared goals and resources?	Number of Alumni community members engaged in the alumni community Number of activities	Registered alumni may not be active. Set a time for last activity to define a cut off. <i>Note: that technical changes, e.g. change of platform etc., can affect the membership.</i>

	Output indicator 2.5 (Initiative Level)	Knowledge creation via: Number of guidelines, best practices, joint publications developed (via sensemaking workshops, community events, other work packages etc.)	How productive is the community in creating knowledge products?	Number of publications per year	
Outcome 3		HEIs recognised as drivers of societal transformation			
	Outcome indicator 3.1	Perception of HEI roles in driving societal transformation	How do survey respondents perceive the HEI role, e.g. in terms of promoting solutions for societal transformation, showcasing relevant innovations, leadership in relevant initiatives.	<p>Survey</p> <p>The quality of start-ups or innovations for societal transformation could also be captured through the survey.</p> <p>Ecosystem stakeholders may be asked how they</p>	There is a risk that results will depend also on who is surveyed and the ecosystem surveyed, which will need

				<p>perceive the HEI, on a scale and with open text option<sup>5</sup>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Promoting solutions for societal transformation</li> <li>▪ Showcasing relevant innovations</li> <li>▪ Leading or contributing to initiatives that drive societal innovations</li> </ul>	<p>to be considered in the survey.<sup>6</sup> One mitigation way is relying on the Alumni Community.</p>
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<sup>5</sup> Describing or assessing the quality of start-ups or innovations for societal transformation could be another aspect of the survey.

<sup>6</sup> The literature suggests that the number of start-ups or innovations is often overemphasized as an indicator of success. A more meaningful measure would be the quality of start-ups or innovations for societal transformation. How do survey respondents perceive the HEI role, e.g. in terms of promoting solutions for societal transformation, showcasing relevant innovations, leadership in relevant initiatives. For example, TU/e evaluates its research and innovation outputs based on their alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This includes measuring the environmental impact of its research, such as innovations in clean energy, sustainable transport, and smart cities. Furthermore, TU/e tracks its

EITHE03.1	<p>Output indicator 3.1 (Consortium Level)</p> <p>Domain: Supporting Innovation and Business generation</p>	<p>Number of start-ups and scale-ups supported</p>	<p>Number (#) of start-ups and scale-ups supported by KICs for at least 2 months in year N, provided the KIC's services contribute to the company's growth (including potential growth).</p> <p>Structured data to be provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Year of reporting</li> <li>▪ Company name</li> <li>▪ Company registration number</li> <li>▪ Country of registration</li> <li>▪ Gender of the CEO</li> <li>▪ Reference to a specific KIC KAVA</li> <li>▪ Was the company supported through the EIT HEI Initiative?</li> </ul>	<p>Data harvested as part of project activities by project consortia, and aggregated by MEL Team</p>	<p>Complementing output indicators with outcome indicators could provide a more comprehensive picture of whether HEIs are contributing as drivers of societal transformation.</p>
<p>EITH04.1</p> <p>and</p> <p>EITH04.4 (Internal Core EIT KPI)</p>	<p>Output Indicator 3.2 (Consortium Level)</p> <p>Domain: Supporting Innovation</p>	<p>Number of Startups created</p>	<p>Number (#) of start-ups established in year N as a result / based on the output(s) of KAVA(s), or start-ups created for the purpose of an innovation project to organise and support the development of an asset (but not later than</p>		

involvement in social innovation, particularly through social entrepreneurship and community impact, reflecting the university's commitment to addressing challenges like healthcare access, inequality, and urban sustainability. This type of information is more qualitative in nature and could be captured through the survey.

	and Business generation		<p>three years after the completion of KAVA).</p> <p>Structured data for the KPI:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Year of reporting</li> <li>▪ Company name</li> <li>▪ Company registration number</li> <li>▪ Country of the company registration</li> <li>▪ Gender of the company CEO</li> <li>▪ Link to the specific KAVA</li> <li>▪ Was the company created through the EIT HEI Initiative?</li> </ul>	
EITHE01.1	<p>Output indicator 3.3 (Consortium Level)</p> <p>Domain: Supporting Innovation and Business generation</p>	<p>Number of innovative products, processes and methods &amp; Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) applications resulting from KIC activities</p>	<p>What are the innovative products, processes and methods &amp; Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) applications resulting from KIC activities?</p> <p>Structured data to be provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Year of reporting</li> <li>▪ Type of intellectual property right: patent; trademark; registered design; utility model; other</li> <li>▪ Application title</li> <li>▪ Application reference</li> <li>▪ Application date</li> <li>▪ IPR owner</li> </ul>	

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Country of the IPR owner</li> <li>▪ Does the IPR owner take part in the HEI Capacity Building Initiative (HEI CBI)</li> <li>▪ IPR status: has the IPR protection been awarded</li> <li>▪ IPR Award reference if any</li> <li>▪ Technology Readiness Level</li> <li>▪ Reference to KAVA/portfolio</li> </ul> <p>No supporting evidence</p>		
EITHE06.1 (Internal Core EIT KPI)	<p>Output indicator 3.4 (Consortium Level)</p> <p>Domain: Supporting Innovation and Business generation</p>	Investment attracted by KIC supported startups and scale-ups	<p>Total EUR amount of private and public capital attracted within year N by supported start-ups / scale-ups (per country) that have received KIC business creation services support or HEI CBI project support of total duration of at least two months, within a maximum of three years following the last received KIC KAVA incl. project support activity. Supporting evidence: declaration of a start-up proving the amount, type of investment, source of income by type (public/private) and a link to a specific KAVA and support received and the year</p>		<p>Capital raised and communication efforts are indirect indicators of HEIs being recognized as drivers of societal transformation.</p> <p>However, there is a risk that these activities generate hype without delivering real results. Complementing a range of output indicators with outcome indicators can help minimize this risk.</p>

			when last support was provided.		
EITHE02.4 (Internal Core EIT KPI)	Output indicator 3.5 (Consortium Level)  Domain: Supporting Innovation and Business generation	Number of Innovations launched on the market	Number (#) of innovations introduced on the market during the KAVA duration or within 3 years after completion with a sales revenue of at least 10 000 EUR documented. Innovations introduced on the market must be directly linked with the KAVA and reported in the year when they reached the first revenue (but not later than three years after completion of the KAVA).  Structured data for the KPI: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Year of reporting</li> <li>▪ Name of the innovation</li> <li>▪ Type of innovation (e.g. new product, new service)</li> <li>▪ Market (country)</li> <li>▪ Country of origin of the company commercialising the innovation</li> </ul>		

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reference to a specific KIC KAVA</li> <li>▪ Was the innovation developed and launched on the market as a result of the capacity building activities delivered as part of the HEI CBI?</li> <li>▪ Was the innovation launched by learners/graduates from labelled programmes (or with direct link to participating in the labelled activity)?</li> </ul>		
	Output indicator 3.6 (Initiative Level)	Communication and visibility via: Number of communication materials and engagement (media analysis, outreach)	The total count of communication materials produced (e.g., reports, brochures, social media posts) and engagement activities (e.g., media analysis, outreach efforts) aimed at increasing visibility	Maintaining a log of all produced communication materials, tracking audience engagement through analytics tools (e.g., social media metrics, website traffic), and analysing media coverage to assess visibility.	
		Number of Most Significant Stories published on EIT HEI and HEI websites and reach	The total count of impactful or notable stories related to the EIT HEI Initiative, published on the EIT HEI and HEI websites. Reach: The total audience or number of individuals who have accessed or interacted with these stories across platforms.	Tracking and documenting all stories published on the EIT HEI and HEI websites. Reach will be verified through web analytics tools to measure audience interaction, such as page views, clicks, and social media engagement, alongside media tracking to assess external exposure.	

		Number of promising innovation and prototypes communicated and supported	The total number of innovative ideas or prototypes, developed before startup phase, that have been effectively communicated and supported through exposure to potential stakeholders.	Documenting the number of innovations and prototypes shared through communication channels (e.g., presentations, reports, online platforms). Support will be verified through records of exposure and engagement metrics such as participant feedback or the number of stakeholders involved will also be tracked.	
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Link to [EIT Impact Framework](#)

Link to [EIT KPIs and EIT CORE KPIs](#)

## Annex 3: Intended Users and Target Groups of the MEL Framework

User: Higher Education Initiative consortia partners including academic and non-academic partners

HEI Consortia partners are the engine of the EIT Higher Education Initiative. They play a central role in shaping and driving projects, actively fostering institutional change, strengthening regional innovation ecosystems, modernizing university curricula, and catalyzing the creation of new startups and innovation-driven initiatives. The EIT Higher Education Initiative has supported 351 Higher Education Institutions, encompassing both advanced and less advanced HEIs in terms of their engagement with the "third mission". The initiative has also supported 334 non-academic organizations, which participated in 69 projects. Non-academic partners often include public or private, SMEs and specialists in startups, accelerators, innovation, and service providers e.g. in entrepreneurship training, playing a crucial role in supporting entrepreneurial and innovation ecosystems.

HEI consortia partners have a range of needs when it comes to MEL. HEI consortia partners play a critical role in shaping entrepreneurial strategies and activities within HEI. They seek to understand how their projects are shaping institutional change towards an entrepreneurial HEI. Additionally, they aim to assess the satisfaction and knowledge of students and staff engaged in entrepreneurial capacity-building efforts. They seek to communicate how their projects foster innovation and change, such as startups tackling societal challenges. Tracking progress among partners helps ensure alignment and adaptive management. They also prioritize learning—refining insights and adapting tested or emerging approaches to diverse contexts for greater impact.

*"It helps you look at numbers, but I think testimonials would have been better. A student who attended the hackathon came from business school and said they learned more about entrepreneurship at hackathons than in their business school the whole year. This is more important than their numbers., numbers don't tell the story".* HEI partner

*"Monitoring institutional change was difficult to assess because the change needs time to happen. The effects of having new structures or processes in place need more time to show and be measurable".* HEI partner, *"Updates on where we are in work packages were very helpful to know where we are and helped our work become more contextual",* HEI partner

They also want a MEL that helps communicate HEI-Business partnership as drivers of innovation that addresses societal challenges. They want to show results on how HEI-business partnership are generating innovation and change and they want stories about how research and business work on societal challenges.

*"We are actually more in the business of change rather than the performance and outputs – it should be less about output-level indicators such as students trained, although this is helpful, we need to better capture the actual changes we are contributing to. I am curious to see our impacts after 2030, we will then assess what we will have gained and how we may further capitalize on this, e.g. better support student and faculty exchange"* Business Consortia Partner

*"There are so many challenges including environmental pollution and overcrowded cities – showing how research and business work on those challenges can yield great results"* Business Consortia Partner.

User: KICS

KICs (Knowledge and Innovation Communities) are partnerships established by the European Institute of Innovation & Technology (EIT) to bring together businesses, research institutions, and universities to drive innovation in specific sectors. Each KIC focuses on a key societal challenge, fostering collaboration across disciplines and industries to develop new solutions, education programs, and startups. EIT and EIT KICs established the EIT Higher Education Initiative to raise the bar and create systemic impact in higher education and strengthen innovation ecosystems.

Consortia partners within the EIT Higher Education Initiative select the KIC that best aligns with their sector, focus area, and innovation goals. This allows them to leverage the specific expertise, networks, and resources of the chosen KIC to enhance their project's impact and effectiveness. KICs then act as facilitators, supporters, and connectors between consortia partners and the broader innovation ecosystem. They provide sector-specific expertise, industry links, and innovation frameworks to strengthen HEIs' entrepreneurial and innovation capacity. By bridging HEIs with businesses, research institutions, and startups, KICs foster stronger regional ecosystems and help integrate entrepreneurship into curricula.

As part of EIT, KICs operate with strong accountability in MEL. They must meet their own outcome indicators, as assessed by EIT, while also demonstrating contributions to the EIT Impact Framework—such as investment attracted by KIC-supported startups and scale-ups.

Beyond metrics, KICs seek to communicate and learn how they drive systemic change, reinforcing their role in tackling societal challenges. This ability to showcase their added value—known as KAVA (KICs Additional Value Added)—is essential for proving their impact in fostering innovation.

#### User: EIT

As a body of the European Union, the European Institute of Innovation & Technology (EIT) was established to strengthen Europe's ability to innovate and create sustainable growth and skilled jobs in Europe. Jointly with its multi-disciplinary ecosystem of leading organisations from business, education and research across the EU, it provides a wide range of education, innovation and entrepreneurship activities across Europe. The EIT channels funding to the Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) as well as, via the EIT Higher Education Initiative, the project consortia participating in the EIT Higher Education Initiative.

The EIT has a need to ensure accountability and returns on its public investment into the projects funded under the EIT Higher Education Initiative. These returns consist mainly of more competitive business and successful startups, resulting in economic growth, employment and productivity. Each KIC and by extension all project consortia participating in the calls of the EIT Higher Education Initiative monitor and report on specific output KPIs. The indicators capture the expected return on investment.

#### Target Group: European Commission

Interest: Under 'Horizon Europe' - the EU's key funding programme for research and innovation - the European Commission provides funding to the EIT and by extension to the KICs and the EIT Higher Education Initiative. For the public investment to be justified over time, it requires clear and communicable evidence on impact across the EIT HEI Initiative's five action domains. This includes HEIs empowered in their Third Mission, deeper collaboration across the knowledge triangle, as well as education, learning, and joint action on innovation and entrepreneurship towards societally beneficial and marketable innovations.

#### Target Group: Local and regional governments

Interest: Regional development can strongly benefit from innovation ecosystems where businesses, HEIs, and research organizations contribute to societal wellbeing, attractive jobs and regional competitiveness. Actors in regional and local governments can greatly benefit from projects and also play a vital role by enabling, participating, and giving visibility to such collaborations. They are interested in evidence of success in the form of stories and data. They can also benefit from insights in how to drive regional integration from more effective innovation collaboration within the knowledge triangle. Where they see HEIs as drivers of innovation and entrepreneurship, they will be more inclined to support the "third mission" through policy and funding.

#### Target group: HEI leaders

Most HEIs are seen as prioritizing students as their primary audience in their communications, often focusing on prestige, student experience, research innovations, and social impact to attract students and funding. The MEL could support HEI leaders in showcasing the impact of entrepreneurship programs on students and research teams, as well as the innovations emerging from these efforts. Additionally, HEI leaders could position their institutions as entrepreneurial universities by highlighting key partnerships, entrepreneurial curricula developed, and startups launched. Innovation driving societal transformation is especially attractive for students and increases attractiveness of the university.

## Annex 4: MSC Story Collection Template

### Instructions:

- Please provide clear, specific responses while avoiding descriptions of routine activities.
- Please focus on unexpected or transformational changes rather than planned outputs.
- Please consider both intended and unintended impacts on stakeholders.

### 2. Please describe a story that best illustrates the Most Significant Change that you have identified by answering the questions below.

*Aim to provide clear, specific, and insightful responses.*

*Out of all the changes you have seen, here you'll share a story that best illustrates the change that you deemed most significant for your project objective.*

#### 2.1. Title of the Story: What is the headline of the story?

*Choose and write an engaging title of your story.*

- Please provide a concise, engaging title that *captures the essence of the change observed*.

#### 2.2. Context: What was the situation before the change? (Max. 700 characters)

*Explain how the situation was before you started the project. As specific as you can show through facts the situation before the project, the needs for such intervention, challenges that is facing, conditions that you wanted to improve or strengthen.*

- Describe the *problem, challenge, opportunity or any background context before the intervention*.
- *Who was affected, and how?*
- *What were the conditions that made this change necessary?*

#### 2.3. The Change: What change took place, and who was involved? (Max. 1000 characters)

*Here is important to state the facts that show us, together with the previous question, that there was a "before" and "after" due to your project activities and intervention. Factual information: who was involved, who benefitted, what happened, where, and when. What has changed thanks to your intervention and how it happened? We are not asking you to tell us what has been delivered (e.g., training program) but how and which change the delivery brought.*

- Describe *what changed* (new practices, behaviours, or conditions).
- Describe *what is exciting about the change*
- *Who was involved?* (e.g., stakeholders, beneficiaries, facilitators).
- *Where and when did the change occur?*
- *Avoid focusing only on activities* (e.g., "training was conducted")—instead, highlight the transformation and its impact.

#### 2.4. Enabling Factors: What key factors enabled this change? (Max. 500 characters)

State all important internal and/or external factors that enabled this change (if any).

- What support, structures, or decisions within your organisation or consortium made this change possible? (It can be anything, from human resources, experience, technology, knowledge, relationships...)
- What external elements contributed to change? (e.g., policies, funding, community engagement, cultural shifts)
- Highlight the most influential factors rather than listing many factors.

**2.5. Why is this change "the most significant change" for the long-term objective of your project? (max. 700 characters)**

Think about your long-term objective and state why this change is "the most significant change" and how relate to your long-term objective.

- How does this change align with your project's overall impact goals?
- What makes this change particularly transformational compared to other changes observed?
- How might this change be sustained in the future?

**2.6. Lessons Learned: What key lesson did you learn from this change and its process? (Max. 500 characters)**

- What insights did you gain from this change?
- What worked well, and what challenges did you face?

**2.7. Recommendations: Which recommendations would you like to share with other HEIs and organisations? (Max. 500 characters)**

- What advice would you share with others based on this experience?

**Supporting Evidence (Optional)**

Attach any relevant photos, testimonials, or data that support the story.

## Annex 5. Glossary, Abbreviations and Key Definitions

**Developmental Evaluation:** An iterative, embedded approach to evaluation, designed to support learning particularly in complex or uncertain environments. It involves providing real-time, or near real-time, (independent) feedback to intervention staff, thus facilitating ongoing learning and enabling improvements during implementation.

**Key Performance Indicator (KPI):** A subset of indicators that are considered to be the most important to achieving goals, and used to monitor progress, in an ongoing way.

**Indicator:** Quantitative or qualitative factor or variable of interest, related to the intervention and its results, or to the context in which an intervention takes place. Note: An indicator is always approximate only (i.e. not an exact measure) and requires interpretation and explanation, even if assessed accurately. Indicators should provide simple, verifiable, and reliable means to track changes and performance.

**Innovation Ecosystem:** Innovation ecosystem is the term used to describe the large number and diverse nature of participants and resources that are necessary for innovation. These include “entrepreneurs, investors, researchers, university faculty, venture capitalists as well as business development and other technical service providers such as accountants, designers, contract manufacturers and providers of skills training and professional development”

**Impacts:** The extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level Effects. Note: Impact addresses the ultimate significance and potentially transformative effects of the intervention. It seeks to identify social, environmental and economic effects of the intervention that are longer term or broader in scope than those already captured under the effectiveness criterion. Beyond the immediate results, impact seeks to capture the indirect, secondary and potential consequences of the intervention. It does so by examining the holistic and enduring changes in systems or norms, and potential effects on people’s well-being, human rights, gender equality, and the environment.

**MEL approach / strategy:** Refers to the scope and purpose of Monitoring Evaluation and Learning (MEL), the conceptual underpinnings, principles and priority areas that drive the development and implementation of the MEL framework and system.

**MEL framework:** Captures all the required information needed to monitor, evaluate and learn from a particular programme – objectives, indicators, questions, risk and assumptions

**MEL system:** Is where everything comes together. It covers all the work to be carried out, roles and responsibilities during the programme to collect, store, analyse and use information and evidence.

**Most Significant Change (MSC):** Most Significant Change (MSC) technique, a participatory monitoring and evaluation method that involves collecting and assessing the changes and impacts that have happened as a result of a program from the perspective of the project stakeholders. As such, it provides “a way to measure intangible qualitative indicators like ‘empowerment’ or ‘confidence’ through the systematic collection and analysis of stories provided by stakeholders”.

**Outputs:** The products, capital goods and services that result from an intervention. Outputs may also include changes resulting from the intervention that contribute to the achievement of outcomes. Outputs include changes in knowledge, skills, or abilities produced by the activities. Note: Outputs are within the control of the implementing team and attributable to it.

**Outcomes:** The short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention's outputs. Note: Outcomes are often changes in the institutional and behavioural capacities for development conditions that occur between the completion of outputs and the achievement of impacts.

**Sensemaking:** Sensemaking forms the core link between Project level evidence (generated through impact monitoring) and the learning that it generates at the Initiative level. It refers to a structured approach for linking data analysis, insights, and synthesis to produce intelligence that enables informed decision making.

**Theory of Change:** The way the intervention is expected to achieve or achieves change. It represents how people understand change to occur in a given context, including explicit (or implicit) assumptions about the causal links between inputs, activities and results. Often also includes evidence and risks for these elements of the results chain.

## Abbreviations

IVAP: Innovation Vision Action Plan. This is a vision for innovation between the beginning of the projects and 2030 with a clear, step-by-step Action Plan leading to lasting impact that forms the basis of the applications that are submitted as proposals for Calls from the EIT Higher Education Initiative.

EIT: The European Institute of Innovation and Technology is an independent body of the European Union.

EIT KICs: EIT Knowledge Innovation Communities (KICs).

HEIs: Higher Educational Institutions

The Projects: The Projects or The HEI Projects are the successful proposals funded by the HEI Initiative and made up of consortia that include HEIs and non-HEI organisations.

EIT KPI: Cross-cutting performance and output metrics used to measure performance of all EIT KICs, and their projects indicated in the EIT Impact Framework and EIT HEI Initiative MEL Framework.

EIT Core KPIs: High value performance and output metrics that are indicated in red font in the EIT Impact Framework.

MEL – Framework: Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework

ToC: Theory of Change

I&E: Innovation and Entrepreneurship

KT: Knowledge Triangle

WS: Workshop



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