

EIT Higher Education Initiative

Call for Proposals 2026

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

FAQs for Applicants
20/10/2026

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The Call text is the authoritative source for all eligibility conditions, requirements, deadlines and funding rules. Applicants should consult the relevant sections of the Call text and the Project Design and Implementation Guide for further details.

1. General scope and policy objectives

What are the main policy objectives of the 2026 Call?

The Call has three interconnected Policy Objectives:

1. Develop STEM talent for deep-tech and manufacturing innovation, by strengthening the innovation, entrepreneurship and intellectual property (IP) management competences of STEM students, academics and staff.
2. Strengthen higher education institutions (HEIs) as institutional drivers of innovation from research to market, including through stronger institutional capabilities and pathways for knowledge valorisation, technology transfer, entrepreneurship, commercialisation and industrial application.
3. Connect HEIs to regional and European deep-tech and manufacturing innovation ecosystems, strengthening collaboration with industry and other relevant innovation actors.

For details, see Section 2.2 of the Call text.

Must projects address all three Policy Objectives?

Yes. Projects must contribute to all three Policy Objectives. However, the approach, activities and expected results should be tailored to the needs, priorities and maturity of the participating HEIs.

Each participating HEI must complete the HEInnovate self-assessment. Its findings should inform the consortium's Innovation Vision Action Plan (IVAP), including the choice of Funded Actions and the activities proposed. Projects are not expected to address every Specific Objective or Sub-objective. They should explain why their chosen priorities are relevant and how the proposed intervention will contribute to sustainable institutional change.

For details, see Sections 2.3 and 2.4 of the Call text.

How does the Call relate to EU policy priorities?

The Call supports EU priorities on competitiveness, innovation, skills and the development of deep-tech and manufacturing capabilities. Relevant policy frameworks include the European Competitiveness Agenda, the New European Innovation Agenda, the Clean Industrial Deal, the Union of Skills and the STEM Education Strategic Plan. It also supports stronger pathways from research to market, in line with the EU Start-up and Scale-up Strategy and EU knowledge valorisation policy.

Applicants should explain how their project contributes to the relevant priorities rather than simply listing policy documents.

For details, see Section 2.1 of the Call text.

What is the overall scope of the Call?

The Call aims to strengthen HEIs as drivers of manufacturing and deep-tech innovation by connecting three dimensions: STEM talent development, institutional innovation capacity and ecosystem integration.

Projects should develop the competences needed to innovate and commercialise knowledge and technologies; strengthen the institutional structures and processes that support innovation and entrepreneurship; and connect HEIs with businesses, investors, entrepreneurs, research organisations and other relevant innovation actors. The aim is to create more connected and sustainable pathways from research and knowledge to validation, commercialisation, industrial application and market uptake.

For details, see Sections 2.1 and 2.2 of the Call text.

What fields are considered STEM under the 2026 Call?

STEM broadly covers the following fields of education under the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED):

- Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics (field 05).
- Information and Communication Technologies (field 06).
- Engineering, manufacturing and construction (field 07).

Related interdisciplinary fields and studies are also included, as specified in the Call. Projects should demonstrate the relevance of their target groups and activities to manufacturing and deep-tech innovation.

For details, see Section 2.5.1 of the Call text.

What does the Call mean by strengthening the pathway from research to market?

Projects should help HEIs move from fragmented support activities towards more connected pathways for innovation. This involves strengthening links between research, talent development, technology transfer, entrepreneurship and institutional innovation support, while connecting these capabilities with the external expertise, infrastructure, investment and markets needed to advance innovations and start-ups.

The objective is to help promising knowledge and technologies progress towards validation, commercialisation, industrial application and market uptake.

What is expected of HEI leadership and institutional engagement?

HEI leadership is expected to support the project from the proposal stage through implementation and to help embed innovation and entrepreneurship in institutional strategies, structures and practices.

Each HEI participating as a funded beneficiary must provide the required top-management Commitment Letter using the official template available through the Application Portal. The letter must identify the faculties, departments or equivalent units involved, as required by the Call.

Projects should also explain how leadership will remain engaged and how the changes supported by the project can be sustained beyond the funding period.

For details, see Sections 3.1 and 4 of the Call text.

2. Eligibility and consortium composition

Who can apply? Are non-HEI partners required?

Applications must be submitted by consortia that meet the eligibility and composition requirements in the Call text. In summary, the consortium must include:

- At least three HEIs established in three different countries eligible for Horizon Europe, with at least one HEI established in an EU Member State.
- At least two industry partners and/or industry representative organisations, whether public or private.
- An HEI acting as project coordinator.

The consortium should reflect the Knowledge Triangle by connecting higher education, research and business. Industry partners operating in manufacturing or industrial technologies, and organisations with relevant expertise in innovation and pathways from research to market, are particularly encouraged.

Applicants must also meet the Call's requirements concerning the faculties, departments or equivalent units involved in each participating HEI.

For details, see Section 4 of the Call text.

Can an organisation participate in more than one proposal?

An organisation may participate as a funded partner (beneficiary) in only one application. If the same organisation is included as a beneficiary in more than one proposal, the first proposal submitted through the Application Portal will be considered, subject to the provisions in the Call. If that proposal is found ineligible under another eligibility criterion, a subsequent proposal may be considered, provided it meets all other requirements.

An organisation may participate as an associated partner in more than one Call 2026 project, in accordance with the Call's conditions.

For details, see Section 4.1 of the Call text.

Can a Knowledge Transfer Office (KTO) or Technology Transfer Office (TTO) participate as a separate funded partner?

Yes, provided that the KTO or TTO is a separate legal entity with its own unique Participant Identification Code (PIC) and meets the applicable eligibility requirements.

A unit within an HEI that is not a separate legal entity cannot participate as a separate funded beneficiary.

Can previous EIT HEI partners, including previous project coordinators, apply?

Previous EIT HEI participants may apply, subject to the eligibility requirements. Organisations funded as beneficiaries under the EIT HEI Call 2025 (Cohort 5) are not eligible to participate as funded beneficiaries in Call 2026.

Previous project coordinators may apply again, including as coordinators, provided the proposed consortium meets the eligibility criteria and the project demonstrates clear additionality. The proposal must not simply continue or replicate activities funded previously.

Organisations from Cohorts 1 - 4 are encouraged to build on their experience as Innovation and Entrepreneurship Pioneers. They should explain how their experience will add value to the new project, for example by scaling or institutionalising successful approaches, transferring knowledge, mentoring less experienced partners or sharing good practices with the wider EIT HEI Community.

For details, see Sections 3.4 and 4 of the Call text.

Can EIT Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) participate as funded partners?

No. EIT KICs cannot participate as funded beneficiaries in EIT HEI Call 2026 projects.

Following selection, each project will be allocated to a participating KIC for project management, contracting, implementation support, monitoring and reporting. This allocation does not replace the requirement for projects to engage with the two or three KICs identified in their proposal.

For details, see Sections 3.3 and 11.5 of the Call text.

What documentation must HEIs provide?

Each HEI participating as a funded beneficiary must provide the required evidence of accreditation by the relevant national authorities and a signed top-management Commitment Letter using the official template. The letter must identify the participating faculties, departments or equivalent units in accordance with the Call.

These requirements do not apply to non-HEI partners or associated partners unless otherwise specified in the Call.

For details, see Section 4 of the Call text.

What documentation must Associated Partners provide?

All Associated Partners must submit a Letter of Commitment, using the Associated Partner Letter of Commitment Template.

3. Application and submission

What is the Innovation Vision Action Plan (IVAP)?

The IVAP is the project proposal and strategic action plan submitted through the Application Portal. It consists of two parts:

- Part A – Technical Information: completed online and covering the project and partner details, operational capacity, Funded Actions, KPIs, KIC alignment, work packages, deliverables, milestones, risks and budget.
- Part B – Narrative Content: completed using the Word template and covering Excellence, Impact, and Quality and Efficiency of Implementation.

Both parts must be completed and submitted through the Application Portal in accordance with the Call instructions.

For details, see Section 13.2 of the Call text and the Project Design and Implementation Guide.

Must every participating HEI complete the HEInnovate self-assessment?

Each HEI participating as a funded beneficiary must complete the HEInnovate self-assessment. The results must be no more than six months old at the time of application submission.

The findings should inform the consortium's assessment of institutional needs and priorities, the selection of Funded Actions and the design of the IVAP. Non-HEI partners and associated partners are not required to complete the self-assessment.

For details, see Section 2.4.1 of the Call text.

How many Funded Actions must a project select?

Each project must select exactly eight Funded Actions from the five EIT HEI Impact Domains:

- At least one Action from each of Domains 1–4.
- Two additional Actions from Domains 1–4.
- Both Actions from Domain 5.

The selection should be based on the participating HEIs' needs and priorities, informed by the HEInnovate self-assessments. The proposal should explain why the selected Actions are appropriate and how the associated activities contribute to the project's objectives and expected results.

For details, see Section 2.4.2 of the Call text.

What makes a strong IVAP?

A strong IVAP presents a coherent, evidence-based intervention. It should show a clear connection between institutional needs, the Call's Policy Objectives, the selected Funded Actions, planned activities, expected results, KPIs and longer-term institutional change.

It should also demonstrate meaningful leadership engagement, a complementary consortium, relevant links with the selected EIT KICs, realistic implementation arrangements and a credible plan for sustaining results beyond the funding period.

Applicants should consult the award criteria and sub-criteria in Section 11.1 of the Call text.

How long can Part B be?

Part B must comply with the page limit specified in the application template and Call. Applicants do not need to use the full page allowance. In particular, some information required under Section 3, Quality and Efficiency of Implementation, is entered directly in the Application Portal and should not be duplicated unnecessarily in Part B.

Applicants should follow the instructions in the Part B template and ensure that all required information is provided across Part A and Part B.

4. KPIs and measurement of results

Which KPIs must projects deliver?

Projects must meet all mandatory EIT HEI KPI requirements specified in the Call and select at least one applicable EIT Core KPI from the permitted options. The Call also identifies an optional EIT HEI KPI that projects may report where relevant.

The mandatory EIT HEI KPI requirements include:

- EITHE03.1 and/or EITHE04.1: support for start-ups and scale-ups and/or start-up creation.
- EITHE08.1: successful participants in eligible education and training activities.
- EITHE19.1: new or improved institutional structures and mechanisms supporting innovation and/or entrepreneurship.
- EITHE20: new partnerships contributing to innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem integration.

Projects must meet the minimum targets and comply with the definitions and specific conditions set out in the Call. At least one selected EIT Core KPI must also be achieved within the project funding period, by the deadline specified in the Call.

Applicants should consult Section 2.5 of the Call for the definitive KPI list, definitions, minimum targets and requirements.

Are minimum KPI targets set for each year?

The Call sets minimum targets for the overall funding period rather than separate minimum targets for each calendar year. However, applicants must plan their KPI delivery by calendar year in the Application Portal. Projects will be expected to deliver in line with the annual commitments in their approved IVAP.

How ambitious should KPI targets be?

Applicants should set targets that are ambitious but achievable given the consortium's capacity, the participating HEIs' needs and the proposed activities.

Targets should be supported by a credible delivery plan, including clear responsibilities, appropriate resources and a realistic explanation of how the project will achieve them. Applicants should not select targets solely to maximise the figures in the proposal.

What training activities count towards EITHE08.1?

To count towards EITHE08.1, training activities must:

- Foster innovation, entrepreneurship and IP management capacities among students, academics and staff enrolled or working in relevant STEM fields.
- Provide a minimum of 10 learning hours.
- Have clearly defined learning outcomes and a competency assessment method.
- Be successfully completed by the participants being counted.

The KPI must be achieved across the three participant categories: students, academic staff and non-academic staff. Projects determine the distribution across these categories in line with their intervention model and target groups.

For details, see Section 2.5.2 of the Call text.

Can training be delivered entirely online?

Yes. Training may be delivered face-to-face, online or in a hybrid format, provided it meets the Call's requirements, including the minimum learning hours, defined learning outcomes, competency assessment and successful completion.

Can the same participant be counted more than once towards EITHE08.1?

No. Each participant must be counted only once towards the training KPI, even if they complete several training activities. Projects must maintain appropriate records in line with the structured data requirements laid out in the EIT Impact Framework to demonstrate successful completion and avoid double counting.

Is there a minimum duration for start-up support under EITHE03.1?

Yes. A start-up or scale-up must receive services that contribute to its growth for a total period of at least two months to count towards EITHE03.1. Examples of relevant services include mentoring, advice on access to finance and markets, marketing support, legal advice, internationalisation and matchmaking.

For details, see Section 2.5.2 of the Call text.

Are KPIs counted per partner or per consortium?

KPI targets apply at project or consortium level, not separately to each partner. All relevant partners should contribute to delivery, and the IVAP should make their roles and responsibilities clear.

Do projects need to demonstrate impact beyond the funding period?

Yes. In addition to delivering the required KPIs within the funding period, projects should explain how the institutional capabilities, partnerships and results they develop can be sustained and further advanced beyond the project.

The IVAP should set out a credible longer-term vision and explain how progress and results will be monitored. Applicants should distinguish between targets that must be achieved during the funding period and longer-term outcomes or impacts, in accordance with the Call's KPI requirements.

5. Funding and project duration

What is the total Call budget and the maximum grant per project?

The Call budget and maximum grant amount are specified in Section 5 of the Call text. The maximum grant is a ceiling, not a guaranteed award: the grant awarded may be lower than the amount requested.

The Call has an indicative total budget of €40 million and a maximum grant of €1.25 million per project.

The applicable funding rate and eligible costs are governed by the Call and the relevant grant agreement. Please see Section 5.2 of the Call text.

Is funding based on actual costs or a lump sum?

Funding follows the actual cost reimbursement model, not the lump-sum approach. Beneficiaries are reimbursed for eligible costs actually incurred and reported during project implementation, subject to the applicable funding rules and eligibility requirements.

What is the pre-financing rate?

Projects selected under this Call will receive a pre-financing payment of 25% of the total grant amount to support smooth project implementation. Interim and final payments may follow an annual schedule, subject to the financial framework and reporting obligations set out in the EIT HEI Project Grant Agreement. Beneficiaries are expected to manage funds responsibly and in compliance with Horizon Europe and EIT financial regulations. For more details, see section 5.3 of the Call text.

What is the project duration and funding period?

The projects selected under the EIT HEI Call 2026 will run for 18 months. The funding period is 1 May 2027 to 31 October 2028, as stated in the current Call guidance.

For the definitive dates, consult Section 13.1 the Call text.

Can projects budget for Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP)?

Projects may include Financial Support to Third Parties in the form of prizes, and only where this is permitted under the Call and the relevant eligibility conditions are met. For details, see Section 5.5 in the Call text.

How are projects monitored and reviewed?

Funded projects will be monitored by their allocated EIT KIC and will participate in the EIT HEI Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework. This includes project-level monitoring and portfolio-level learning and reflection.

The Call and subsequent implementation guidance set out the required review and reporting arrangements. The allocated KIC will provide project-specific information on contractual, monitoring and reporting procedures after selection. See Section 3.6 of the Call text.

Does the 2026 Call use the two-phase “stop-go” model from previous Calls?

No. The 2026 Call provides for a single 18-month funding period, from 1 May 2027 to 31 October 2028.

6. EIT KIC alignment and the EIT HEI Community

How many EIT KICs must a project align with?

Applicants must identify a minimum of two and a maximum of three EIT KICs that are relevant to their project. The IVAP should explain why these KICs are relevant and how their strategic objectives, expertise, networks, programmes or resources could add value to the project.

Applicants should consult the KIC synergy documents provided with the Call.

For details, see Section 3.3 of the Call text.

What is the role of EIT KICs during implementation?

Each selected project is allocated to one participating KIC for project management, contracting, implementation support, monitoring and reporting. The allocated KIC also acts as the project's main interface with the EIT HEI management team and may facilitate access to relevant expertise, networks and opportunities.

Allocation to a KIC does not replace the project's broader engagement with the two or three KICs identified in the proposal. Applicants may indicate preferred KICs, but allocation cannot be guaranteed.

For details, see Sections 3.3 and 11.5 of the Call text.

Can applicants contact KICs before submitting a proposal?

Yes. Applicants may contact the relevant KICs to explore strategic alignment and potential synergies. Contact details are available in the KIC synergy documents and on the Call 2026 webpage.

What participation in EIT HEI portfolio and Community activities is expected?

Projects must actively participate in the relevant portfolio-level and Community activities during the funding period. These may include training, workshops, networking, knowledge exchange, KIC Discovery Days, sensemaking and wider EIT HEI Community events, as specified in the Call and subsequent implementation guidance.

Each project must appoint a Community Officer to coordinate its participation and contributions. Projects should allocate sufficient staff time and resources, including travel where relevant.

Projects must also prepare a Community Engagement Plan by Month 3 and contribute to at least two of the Community contribution areas specified in the Call. The Call's Domain 5 requirements concerning success stories and good practices must also be fulfilled.

For details, see Section 3.5 of the Call text and the Project Design and Implementation Guide.

How can projects contribute to the wider EIT HEI Community?

Projects should share relevant expertise, results, tools, methods and lessons learned so that other HEIs and projects can learn from and, where appropriate, adapt their approaches.

The Call requires contributions to at least two Community contribution areas. These may include Community events and knowledge exchange; training and learning resources; and replicable practices and tools. The precise contribution plan will be developed in line with the Call and implementation guidance.

Projects must also fulfil the specified Domain 5 requirements for success stories and good practices. Contributions should respect intellectual property, confidentiality, personal data and other applicable legal requirements.

7. Diversity, equity and inclusion and the regional dimension

What is required regarding diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI)?

Projects must prepare and submit a DEI Value Statement and Action Plan by Month 3. DEI should be integrated into the project's activities, institutional interventions, governance and partnerships, rather than treated as a standalone exercise.

The plan should identify relevant priorities and concrete measures appropriate to the project context. These may address inclusive participation in STEM education, entrepreneurship and deep-tech innovation; gender equality; participation and progression of underrepresented groups; inclusive institutional practices; and barriers affecting different geographical, social and economic contexts.

Projects should identify how they will monitor progress and use the MEL process to reflect on results and lessons learned.

For details, see the DEI requirements in the Call text and the Project Design and Implementation Guide.

Is participation by organisations in RIS and Widening countries encouraged?

Yes. Broad geographical participation is encouraged, including the involvement of organisations from Regional Innovation Scheme (RIS) and Widening countries, EU outermost regions and other eligible countries or regions that may have had less access to EU funding, support or networks.

Applicants should explain the role of these organisations, how they will participate in the project and how they will benefit from its activities. Where relevant, engagement with regional or territorial authorities can help ensure that the project responds to regional needs and opportunities.

Any geographical or partnership requirements that are formal eligibility conditions remain as set out in the Call.

8. Further applicant support

Where can we find partners for a consortium?

Applicants can use the online matchmaking platform provided for the EIT HEI Call 2026 and hosted on Conversation Starter. Please create a profile and browse potential partners [HERE](#).

Applicants should independently ensure that any proposed consortium meets all eligibility and composition requirements.

Where can applicants find guidance and supporting documents?

The Call 2026 webpage provides the Call text, application templates, KIC synergy documents, the Project Design and Implementation Guide and other supporting materials. Applicants should consult the latest versions of these documents when preparing their proposals.

Who can applicants contact with questions?

For general questions about the application process and participation rules, contact hei@eitrawmaterials.eu.

For questions about alignment with a specific EIT KIC, contact the relevant KIC representative listed on the Call 2026 webpage and in the KIC synergy documents.

Applicants should consult the Call text first, as it remains the authoritative source for eligibility, deadlines, funding conditions and project obligations.

Quick reference

Policy Objectives	Contribute to all three Policy Objectives, with priorities tailored to the participating HEIs' needs.
Consortium	At least three HEIs from three different Horizon Europe eligible countries, including at least one EU Member State; an HEI coordinator; and at least two industry partners and/or industry representative organisations.
HEInnovate	Every HEI funded beneficiary must complete the self-assessment, with results no more than six months old at submission.

Funded Actions	Exactly eight: at least one from each of Domains 1–4, two additional from Domains 1–4, and both Domain 5 Actions.
KIC alignment	Select two or three relevant EIT KICs and explain their added value.
Mandatory EIT HEI KPIs	EITHE03.1 and/or EITHE04.1: 4 combined; EITHE08.1: 2,200; EITHE19.1: 4; EITHE20: 4. Confirm targets and definitions against the final Call.
EIT Core KPI	Select and commit to at least one eligible EIT Core KPI, to be achieved within the project funding period as specified in the Call.
DEI	Submit the DEI Value Statement and Action Plan by Month 3.
Community	Appoint a Community Officer; prepare a Community Engagement Plan by Month 3; contribute to at least two Community contribution areas; fulfil the Domain 5 success-story and good-practice requirements.
Funding period	1 May 2027–31 October 2028 (18 months).
General enquiries	hei@eitrawmaterials.eu