

EIT HEI Call for Proposals 2026

Potential synergies with EIT RawMaterials

EIT RawMaterials (EIT RM) is preparing to play a strategic role in the upcoming EIT Higher Education Initiative Call 2026, as it not only coordinates the overall implementation of the Initiative, it also seeks applications to the Call that align with – and could contribute to – the EIT RawMaterials strategic objectives.

1. Who We Are

EIT RawMaterials is the world's largest network in the raw materials sector, established by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) to strengthen Europe's strategic autonomy and accelerate the transition to a sustainable, circular, and resilient raw materials value chain. Our community brings together industry leaders, universities, research organisations, and innovators across Europe to address critical challenges in exploration, extraction, processing, recycling, substitution, and advanced materials for the green and digital transitions. We operate at the intersection of innovation, education, and entrepreneurship, ensuring that breakthrough ideas become scalable solutions supporting Europe's competitiveness and climate-neutral ambitions.

2. Strategic alignment with the EIT HEI Call 2026

The EIT Higher Education Initiative Call 2026 focuses on strengthening higher education institutions (HEIs) as drivers of manufacturing and deep-tech innovation and entrepreneurship. The Call seeks to develop the talent, institutional capabilities and ecosystem connections needed to turn research and knowledge into innovation, entrepreneurship and real-world industrial impact.

The Call is structured around three Policy Objectives:

- **Talent:** developing innovation, entrepreneurship and intellectual property (IP) capabilities among students, academics and staff in relevant STEM fields, with a focus on the skills needed to develop and commercialise manufacturing and deep-tech innovations.
- **Institutional capacity:** strengthening the institutional structures, processes and leadership needed to support innovation, including knowledge valorisation, technology transfer, IP management and the capacity to bring innovations from lab to market.
- **Ecosystem integration:** building stronger and more systematic partnerships between higher education, industry, investors, research organisations, EIT KICs and regional and European innovation ecosystems.

As the coordinating KIC of the EIT Higher Education Initiative (EIT HEI), EIT RawMaterials brings more than a decade of experience connecting education, research and industry across the raw and advanced materials value chains. Its mission is to secure a sustainable supply of raw materials, strengthen European competitiveness and drive innovation, education and entrepreneurship. That work is anchored in EU priorities, including the Critical Raw Materials Act and the green and digital transitions, and turns them into industrial innovation, new skills and sustainable growth.

The initiative draws on an ecosystem that already connects education with industry, investment, and policy. EIT RawMaterials brings together more than 300 partners from industry, research, and education across Europe. The European Raw Materials Alliance (ERMA), with over 800 members, mobilises stakeholders and investment behind strategic value chains, linking research to industrial projects and investors. The Strategic Impact Group Networks (SIGNs) bring industry, policymakers, researchers and academia together on shared challenges in key value chains, so that institutions can work on problems industry has identified. The Critical Raw Materials Facility builds international partnerships and diversified, resilient supply chains, extending collaboration beyond Europe. And through its mandate to lead the European Raw Materials Academy and the European Advanced Materials Academy, EIT RawMaterials connects higher education, industry and lifelong learning to the skills Europe's workforce needs.

Through the EIT HEI call, EIT RawMaterials helps higher education institutions build their innovation and entrepreneurial capacity, work more closely with industry, and accelerate knowledge and technology transfer. By linking teaching and research to industrial challenges, investment and entrepreneurship, the call equips institutions to turn knowledge into market-relevant solutions and contributes to a more resilient, competitive and sustainable European raw and advanced materials ecosystem.

3. What We Do

EIT RawMaterials delivers concrete services, programmes, and opportunities across the full raw materials value chain. A full overview of activities is available at:

<https://eitrawmaterials.eu/about-us> .

EIT RawMaterials creates impact through three interconnected pillars:

3.1. Knowledge and Innovation

EIT RawMaterials supports innovation from early-stage concepts to market-ready solutions by providing funding for collaborative projects, enabling upscaling activities that help technologies reach industrial maturity, and offering access to world-class infrastructure such as pilot plants, analytical facilities, and laboratories. Close collaboration with industrial partners ensures that innovations respond to real market needs and are positioned for successful commercial uptake.

More information: <https://eitrawmaterials.eu/innovation/>

3.2. Finance and Fundraising

EIT RawMaterials operates one of Europe's strongest entrepreneurship ecosystems in the raw materials sector. Through the RawMaterials Accelerator, Booster funding, and tailored business creation services, we support start-ups and SMEs at various stages of development. Entrepreneurs benefit from coaching, mentoring, investment readiness support, and access to a Europe-wide industrial network that opens pathways to markets, customers, and strategic partnerships.

More information: <https://eitrawmaterials.eu/entrepreneurship/>

3.3. Education and Skills

Our education programmes reinforce the talent pipeline required for Europe's raw materials strategy. We offer EIT Labelled Master's and PhD programmes that combine academic excellence with mobility, industry engagement, and entrepreneurial education. Professional and lifelong learning courses help upskill staff and students to meet industry demands, while thematic trainings and summer schools provide hands-on experience in areas such as critical raw materials, circularity, and industrial innovation.

More information: <https://eitrawmaterials.eu/education-skills>

European Raw Materials Academy & European Advanced Materials Academy

The European Raw Materials Academy (ERMAcademy) and the European Advanced Materials Academy (AMAcademy) are complementary initiatives led by EIT RawMaterials to address Europe's skills gap across the full materials value chain. Both Academies are funded through EIT grants, with implementation periods running until January 2028 (ERMAcademy) and January 2029 (AMAcademy).

ERMAcademy focuses on raw materials supply—exploration, mining, processing, recycling, and circular economy practices. It delivers training to professionals through modular, industry-aligned courses and credentials.

AMAcademy targets advanced materials and high-tech applications, including sustainable-by-design materials, semiconductors, composites, and digital manufacturing. It delivers training to professionals through credentialed courses in emerging technologies such as additive manufacturing and AI-enabled materials design.

Combined impact: Together, the academies create a coordinated skills pipeline: ERMAcademy strengthens Europe's capacity to secure and process critical raw materials, while AMAcademy develops expertise needed for advanced materials innovation. Acting as a bridge between academia, research, policy and industry, this integrated approach supports EU industrial, green, and digital transition priorities.

These activities can directly support talent development and curriculum development aligned with evolving European industrial and STEM priorities, including those emphasised in the 2026 HEI Call.

For universities – become a Learning Content Provider. Higher education institutions can offer their courses through the Academies as Learning Content Providers (LCPs). Courses stay on the university's own learning platform and under its ownership; there is no joining fee, no revenue sharing and no exclusivity. In return, courses gain visibility and European recognition through the Academies' course catalogue, and funding to adapt or co-develop courses may be available through open calls. Courses need to align with the Academies' priority areas and go through a formal assessment before certification. For EIT HEI projects, this is a practical route to extend the reach of training content to professionals across Europe and to connect it with industry demand. Universities with relevant expertise can also contribute as subject-matter experts.

More information: <https://eitrawmaterials.eu/education-skills/become-learning-content-provider>

We also run Regional Innovation Scheme (RIS) programmes designed to strengthen innovation capacity in regions with moderate or modest innovation performance. These programmes help HEIs, research institutions, and companies develop skills, connect with the wider ecosystem, and participate in international value chains.

More information: <https://eitrawmaterials.eu/about-us#ris>

4. Relevance of EIT RawMaterials for the EIT HEI Call 2026

The EIT HEI Call 2026 highlights the need to strengthen HEIs' long-term capacity to drive manufacturing and deep-tech innovation and entrepreneurship across talent, institutional capacity and ecosystem integration. EIT RawMaterials brings relevant sectoral, technical and ecosystem expertise that can contribute across all three areas:

For Talent:

- We support integration of advanced materials, circularity, exploration, processing, and recycling knowledge into university curricula.
- We offer entrepreneurial training aligned with raw materials-driven deep tech.
- We connect HEIs with industrial partners facing real-world raw materials challenges.

For Institutional capacity:

- We can contribute sectoral and technical perspectives to innovation capacity-building activities focused on knowledge valorisation, technology transfer, IP and routes from research to market.
- Our innovation and entrepreneurship activities can provide practical reference points for strengthening institutional pathways from research and technology development towards industrial application and commercialisation.

For Ecosystem integration:

- We provide a strong sectoral network connecting HEIs with industry, research organisations, innovation actors and relevant infrastructure.
- We support the development of innovation ecosystems across multiple countries, regions and disciplines.
- We can help strengthen connections between HEIs and the wider EIT ecosystem, including relevant EIT KIC expertise and networks.

EIT RawMaterials may help consortia ensure that their proposals reflect strategic alignment with European raw materials priorities while strengthening the innovation capacity of HEIs. EIT RawMaterials can contribute its sectoral expertise, innovation infrastructure, entrepreneurship ecosystem and ecosystem-strengthening experience to HEI-led consortia.

Together, we may work to enhance innovation and entrepreneurship capacity within higher education, with particular relevance for STEM fields, deep tech, circularity, advanced materials and manufacturing.

Through collaboration with EIT RawMaterials, HEIs can integrate cutting-edge raw materials and circular-economy knowledge into their curricula and research activities. HEIs may gain access to long-term partnerships with industry and research organisations, enabling them to co-create educational content and innovation-driven programmes. Institutions can strengthen their innovation and entrepreneurship capacity by incorporating raw materials deep-tech perspectives, leveraging access to testbeds, pilot plants, laboratories, datasets, and expert mentors, and embedding themselves more strongly in regional innovation ecosystems that reflect European strategic priorities.

5. Designing your IVAP: Why Collaborate with EIT RawMaterials?

In the context of the 2026 EIT HEI Call for Proposals, alignment and collaboration with EIT RawMaterials can strengthen projects by connecting institutional transformation activities with European deep-tech, manufacturing and raw materials priorities.

- Projects demonstrating alignment with EIT RawMaterials may benefit from expertise and guidance for their capacity-building activities, helping ensure that activities respond to strategic sectoral needs.
- They may seek access to an established entrepreneurship ecosystem that helps transform ideas into start-up ventures or industry collaborations.
- Universities can extend the reach of relevant training content by joining the EIT RawMaterials Academies as Learning Content Providers, connecting their offer with professionals and industry demand across Europe.
- Industrial partners may be engaged directly in co-creation activities, ensuring practical relevance and reinforcing innovation pathways.

- Making the most of training, mentorship, and matchmaking services available at EIT RawMaterials could help integrate students and staff into broader innovation environments, while long-term sustainability support can help project outcomes continue beyond the funding period.

6. Contact & Next Steps

EIT RawMaterials welcomes dialogue with potential applicants preparing for the 2026 HEI Call. We will be happy to engage with HEIs and partners interested in learning more about EIT RawMaterials to inform the design of their innovation capacity-building plans, especially those seeking to tangibly engage with Europe's largest raw materials innovation ecosystem and its activities.

We invite potential applicants to:

1. Reach out for an initial meeting.
2. Identify opportunities for collaboration between the project and EIT RawMaterials (helping to inform proposal development).
3. Explore long-term cooperation with EIT RawMaterials.

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<https://eitrawmaterials.eu/>