European Institute of Innovation & Technology

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EIT Higher Education Initiative (HEI)

Call for Proposals 2026

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V1.0	20 October 2026	N/A	N/A
V2.0	19 November 2026	Change 1: On 13 October 2026, Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2026/2324 lifted the measures of Decision (EU) 2022/2506 on the protection of the EU budget in Hungary. Therefore, the EU conditionality measures for Hungarian public interest trusts are no longer applicable. The paragraph found in Version 1.0 of the Call Text on Hungarian Public Interest Trusts in Section 7.3 has therefore been removed. Change 2: Clarification has been added on participation rules for those organisations participating in an active project funded under EIT HEI Call 2025: *Organisations funded under EIT HEI Call 2025 and participating as beneficiaries in an active EIT HEI Cohort 5 project are not eligible to apply as funded beneficiaries to this EIT HEI Call 2026[1]; they are eligible to apply as Associated Partners (non-funded). Organisations participating as Associated Partners (non-funded) in an active EIT HEI Cohort 5 project are eligible to apply to this EIT HEI Call 2026 as Beneficiaries (funded) and/or Associated Partners (non-funded).*	Section *7.3. EU restrictions on participation* Page 36 Sections 3.4, 4.3. Pages 24, 29

[1] List of participating organisations in projects selected under the EIT HEI Call 2025: https://eit-hei.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/10/HEI_EIT_Participating-Orgs_Full-Document-2026_v3.pdf

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1. Introduction

1.1. Information on the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT)

European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT)

The European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) is a European Union body with a legal personality and a wide legal capacity accorded to legal persons under national law. The EIT was created in 2008 by the European Union (EU) to enhance Europe's global competitiveness by fostering collaboration between businesses, research institutions, and higher education organisations.

The EIT is governed by Regulation (EU) 2021/695 (EIT Regulation)[2], which aligns the EIT's mission with the EU's priorities and the objectives of Horizon Europe on evolving research, innovation, economic growth, job creation, global competitiveness, sustainable growth, higher education and entrepreneurship, by means of the Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs), which address specific societal challenges and are established and supported by the EIT.

The EIT Strategic Innovation Agenda (SIA) 2021-2027 is aligned with Horizon Europe and lays down the priority fields and the strategy of the EIT for future initiatives[3], capacity to generate the best innovation added-value, objectives, key actions, mode of operation, expected results, impact, as well as an estimate of the resources needed for the duration of Horizon Europe.

Horizon Europe Regulation

The Horizon Europe Regulation (EU) 2021/695 foresees that the EIT takes part in the implementation of the Horizon Europe Programme in accordance with its strategic objectives for the period 2021 to 2027[4], as outlined in the Strategic Innovation Agenda of the EIT, and taking into account the strategic planning of Horizon Europe.

EIT and Knowledge and Innovation Community (KIC) relations

The EIT Regulation defines KICs as large-scale Institutionalised European Partnerships of higher education institutions, research organisations, companies and other stakeholders in the innovation process in the form of a strategic network, regardless of its legal form, based on joint mid- to long-term innovation planning to meet the EIT's challenges and contribute to attaining the objectives established.

According to the EIT Regulation, and without prejudice to the Partnership Agreements and grant agreements between the EIT and each KIC, the KICs have substantial autonomy to establish their internal organisation and composition, as well as their agenda and working methods, provided that they result in

[2] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/695/oj/eng
[3] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32021D0820&qid=1624882966988
[4] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32021R0695

progress towards achieving the objectives of the EIT and the KICs, taking into account the strategic planning of Horizon Europe and the strategic direction of the EIT set out in the SIA and by the Governing Board.

Contractual framework between the EIT and the KICs

The long-term relations between the EIT and each KIC are based on a seven-year Partnership Agreement (PA)[5] laying down the general terms and conditions under which the KIC operates as an Institutionalised European Partnership. Subject to positive performance, interim review and outcome of comprehensive assessment of the KIC, the PA can be extended for another period of a maximum of seven years.

The Grant Agreement (GA)[6] is the contractual instrument laying down the provisions concerning the implementation of the KIC activities (KIC Business Plan, Cross-KIC activities, etc.) through grants, on an annual or multi-annual basis of up to three years with the KICs. Business plans describe the main objectives and expected results and actions taken by the KICs.

1.2. Information on the EIT Higher Education Initiative (EIT HEI)

The EIT Higher Education Initiative (hereinafter referred to as the "EIT HEI" or "the initiative"), established under the EIT Strategic Innovation Agenda 2021-2027[7], aims to strengthen European higher education's role in innovation ecosystems. By building institutional innovation and entrepreneurship capacity, the EIT Higher Education Initiative fosters systemic change in higher education institutions (HEIs) and enhances their integration into regional and European innovation networks.

EIT HEI projects follow the Knowledge Triangle Model (see Section 3.3 for more information), described in the EIT Strategic Innovation Agenda, bringing together education, research, and business to co-create impactful solutions to global challenges. Central to the initiative is the creation of a dynamic and inclusive innovation community that connects HEIs, businesses, investors, and other stakeholders, amplifying individual and collective project impact.

1.3. Information on the EIT HEI Implementation Model

This Call is launched in accordance with the EIT Strategic Innovation Agenda (SIA) 2021–2027 and forms part of the EIT HEI. The EIT HEI is implemented collaboratively by a group of participating KICs, referred to collectively as the EIT HEI Consortium. The EIT HEI Consortium is made up of the following participating EIT KICs[8]:

[5] Model Partnership Agreement: https://www.eit.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2024-11/EIT%20KIC%20Partnership%20Agreement%20V2.0_5%20October%202022_Clean.pdf
[6] Horizon Europe Model Grant Agreement: general-mga_horizon-euratom_en.pdf
[7] Decision (EU) No 2021/820 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 on the Strategic Agenda of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) 2021-2027: Boosting the Innovation Talent and Capacity of Europe and repealing Decision No 1312/2013/EU, OJ L 189/3 of 28 May 2021, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021D0820&from=EN
[8] KICs under Partnership Agreement and KICs under Memorandum of Cooperation.

- EIT RawMaterials[9] (coordinating EIT KIC)
- Climate-KIC[10]
- 28Digital[11]
- EIT Food[12]
- EIT Health[13]
- EIT Urban Mobility[14]
- EIT Culture & Creativity[15]

2. EIT HEI Call 2026: Intervention Logic and General Requirements

2.1. Scope

Europe's future competitiveness, technological leadership and strategic autonomy depend on its ability to turn STEM talent, research, knowledge and technologies into innovation, entrepreneurship and industrial and societal impact. This requires stronger connections between higher education, research, skills, technology development, industry and markets, particularly in deep-tech innovation and the strategic technologies underpinning Europe's industrial competitiveness[16]. The Competitiveness Compass[17], the European Competitiveness Agenda[18] and the New European Innovation Agenda[19] all emphasise strengthening Europe's innovation capacity, closing the gap between research and market uptake, and creating the conditions for sustainable competitiveness and technological leadership. The Clean Industrial Deal[20], the Union of Skills[21], the STEM Education Strategic Plan[22], the EU Start-up and Scale-up Strategy[23] and EU valorisation policy[24] further highlight the importance of skills, innovation, entrepreneurship and stronger pathways from research and knowledge to innovation, investment and economic value.

Higher education institutions (HEIs) are central to these objectives, bringing together talent, research, knowledge, infrastructure and connections to innovation ecosystems. However, gaps remain in their

[9] https://eitrawmaterials.eu/
[10] https://www.climate-kic.org/
[11] https://28digital.eu/
[12] https://www.eitfood.eu/
[13] https://eithealth.eu/
[14] https://www.eiturbanmobility.eu/
[15] https://eit-culture-creativity.eu/
[16] Deep tech definition: https://www.eitdeeptechtalent.eu/the-initiative/what-is-deep-tech/
[17] https://commission.europa.eu/topics/competitiveness/competitiveness-compass_en
[18] https://commission.europa.eu/topics/competitiveness_en
[19] https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/strategy/support-policy-making/shaping-eu-research-and-innovation-policy/new-european-innovation-agenda_en
[20] https://commission.europa.eu/topics/competitiveness/clean-industrial-deal_en
[21] https://commission.europa.eu/topics/eu-competitiveness/union-skills_en
[22] https://education.ec.europa.eu/focus-topics/stem
[23] https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/document/download/2f76a0df-b09b-47c2-949c-800c30e4c530_en?filename=ec_rtd_eu-startup-scaleup-strategy-communication.pdf
[24] https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/research-area/industrial-research-and-innovation/eu-valorisation-policy_en

capacity to develop innovation, entrepreneurship and intellectual property (IP) competences, strengthen knowledge valorisation and technology transfer, and connect research and technologies with industry, investors, entrepreneurs, research organisations and wider innovation ecosystems. The EIT HEI Call 2026 therefore aims to strengthen HEIs' capacity to develop entrepreneurial talent, create the institutional conditions for innovation and knowledge valorisation, and connect research and technologies to the expertise, infrastructure, investment and markets needed to progress towards validation, commercialisation and industrial application.

The Call has a strategic focus on deep-tech innovation and its translation into manufacturing and industrial applications. Deep-tech technologies often require manufacturing capabilities, industrial expertise, production capacity, testing and demonstration facilities, investment and market connections to progress from research and laboratory development towards higher technology readiness, market deployment and scale. The Call therefore supports HEIs in strengthening connections between STEM talent, research and technology development, knowledge valorisation and technology transfer, entrepreneurship, manufacturing and industry, and wider innovation ecosystems.

2.2. Policy Objectives

EIT HEI Call 2026 pursues three interconnected policy objectives that define the changes it seeks to achieve: strengthen STEM talent, strengthening institutional capacity for innovation and knowledge valorisation, and strengthening connections between HEIs and deep-tech and manufacturing ecosystems.

Policy Objective 1 – STEM talent for deep tech and manufacturing innovation and entrepreneurship

Strengthen HEI capacity to develop the innovation, entrepreneurship and intellectual property (IP) competences of STEM talent needed to contribute to deep-tech and manufacturing innovation. This includes enabling students, researchers, academic staff and professional staff to apply these competences in real-world innovation and industrial contexts[25].

Policy Objective 2 – Strengthen HEIs as institutional drivers of innovation, from lab to market

Strengthen the institutional structures, processes and capabilities that enable HEIs to develop, valorise, transfer and commercialise knowledge and technologies, support entrepreneurship and create the conditions for innovation to progress towards industrial application and market entry. This includes strengthening leadership, governance, innovation support structures and mechanisms, knowledge and technology transfer capabilities and institutional pathways connecting education, research and innovation.

[25] For this Call, STEM is defined in alignment with the STEM Education Strategic Plan, which "broadly covers the fields of education 'Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics (05)'; 'Information and Communication Technologies (06)' and 'Engineering, manufacturing and construction' (07)' of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), as well as related interdisciplinary fields and studies).

Policy Objective 3 – Connect HEIs to regional and European deep-tech and manufacturing innovation ecosystems

Strengthen HEI capacity to connect talent, research and technologies with the organisations, expertise, infrastructure, investment and markets needed to generate innovation and industrial impact. This includes strategic connections with industry, investors, entrepreneurs, research organisations, technology infrastructures and EIT Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs), and stronger participation in regional and European innovation ecosystems and value chains.

The three Policy Objectives are mutually reinforcing. Projects must contribute to all three, while the relative emphasis and combination of activities may be adapted to the institutional context, needs and maturity of participating HEIs. The intervention logic below shows how the Policy Objectives are translated into types of activities, outputs and expected results, leading to the overall impact sought by the Call.

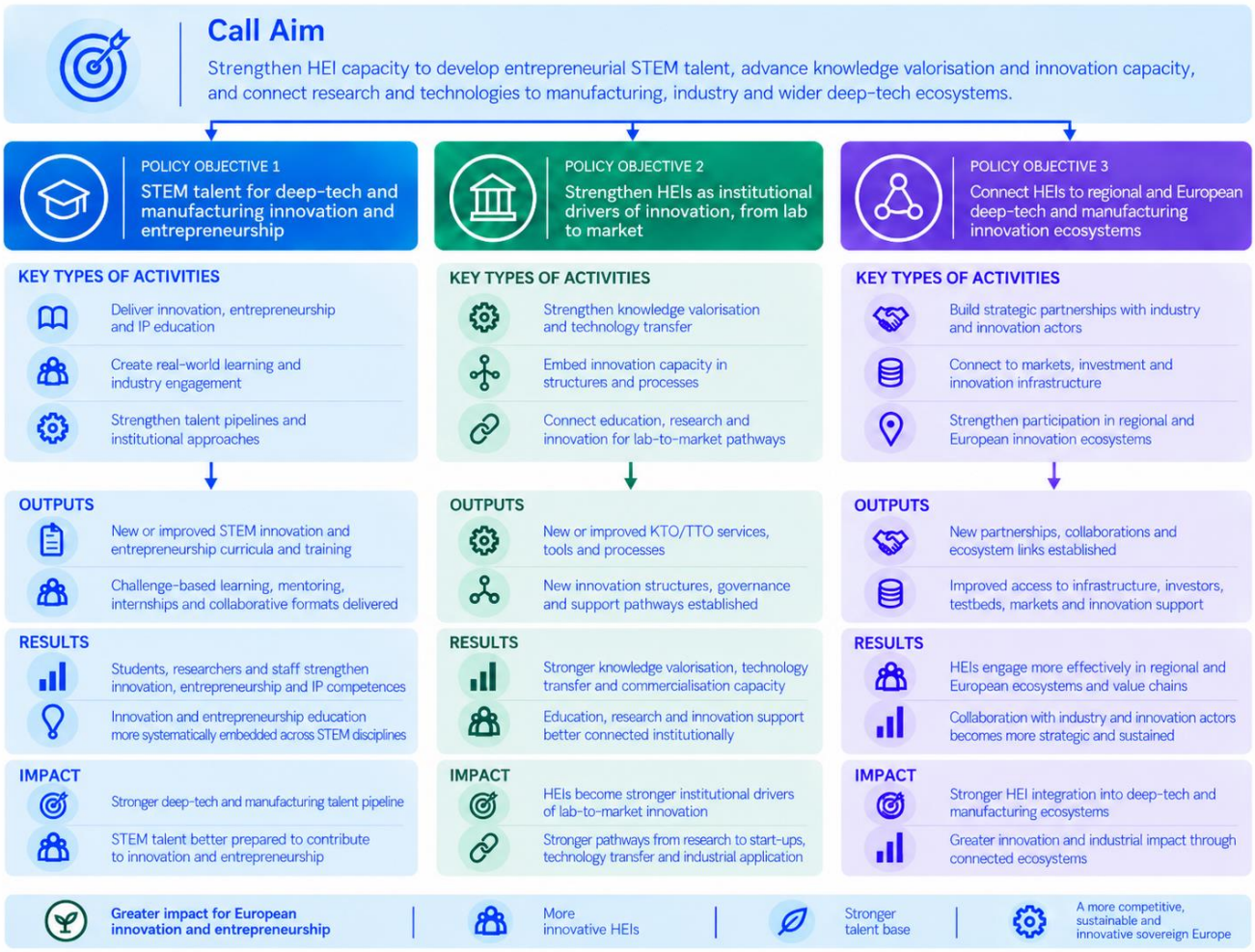

Figure 1: EIT HEI Call 2026 – Policy Objectives and intervention framework

2.3. Specific Objectives and Sub-Objectives

The three Policy Objectives define the broad areas of institutional change sought by the Call. The Specific Objectives translate these into more defined areas of change, while the Sub-objectives describe the expected direction of progress within each area. Projects must contribute to all three Policy Objectives but are not expected to address every Specific Objective or Sub-objective. Applicants should identify the institutional needs and priorities of participating HEIs and define a combination of activities that respond to these needs and contribute to the relevant objectives. The proposal should demonstrate a clear link between identified needs, proposed activities, expected outputs and results, and the relevant Specific and Policy Objectives. The relative emphasis and combination of activities may vary according to the institutional context, maturity, and priorities of participating HEIs.

Policy Objective	Specific Objective	Sub-objectives
1. STEM Talent: Strengthened manufacturing and deep-tech innovation talent pool and readiness	**1.1** Strengthened innovation, entrepreneurship and IP competences among manufacturing and deep-tech relevant STEM talent	**1.1.1** Strengthened innovation, entrepreneurship and IP capabilities among STEM students, researchers, academic staff and professional/non-academic staff, with a focus on skills and competences relevant to manufacturing and deep-tech innovation. **1.1.2** Strengthened interdisciplinary approaches enabling STEM talent to combine technical expertise with innovation, entrepreneurship and IP capabilities.
	1.2 Increased connection between talent development and real-world innovation and industrial challenges	**1.2.1** Increased application of innovation, entrepreneurship and IP competences through challenge-based, experiential and project-based learning addressing real-world manufacturing and deep-tech challenges. **1.2.2** Increased engagement of talent with companies, SMEs, start-ups, research organisations and other innovation actors through internships, mentoring, collaborative projects and other practical experiences.
	1.3 Increased institutionalisation and scale of innovation and entrepreneurship education	**1.3.1** Increased integration of innovation, entrepreneurship and IP within curricula, training programmes and institutional approaches to talent development, particularly across STEM disciplines. **1.3.2** Strengthened institutional structures, support mechanisms and approaches for the sustained development and scaling of innovation and entrepreneurial talent beyond the project lifetime.
	2.1 Strengthened institutional capacity	**2.1.1** Strengthened KTO/TTO capacity and processes for identifying innovation potential, managing and

2. Institutional Innovation Capacity: Enhanced HEI capacity as institutional drivers of manufacturing and deep-tech innovation	for knowledge valorisation and technology transfer	protecting IP, assessing commercialisation opportunities, engaging with industry, and supporting licensing, spin-offs, start-ups and other routes to market, particularly for manufacturing and deep-tech research and technologies. **2.1.2** Strengthened capacity of HEIs and researchers to identify, develop and prepare research and innovation potential for knowledge valorisation, technology transfer and further development towards application and commercialisation.
	2.2 Increased integration and scale of innovation capacity within institutional structures and processes	**2.2.1** Increased integration of innovation, entrepreneurship, knowledge valorisation and technology transfer within institutional strategies, structures and processes. **2.2.2** Strengthened leadership engagement and sustainable organisational, governance and support structures enabling innovation and entrepreneurship across the institution. **2.2.3** Improved monitoring of institutional progress and longer-term change in innovation, entrepreneurship, knowledge valorisation and technology transfer.
	2.3 Strengthened integration of education, research and institutional innovation support	**2.3.1** Strengthened connections between education, research, innovation support, technology transfer and entrepreneurship functions within HEIs, enabling more coherent institutional pathways for talent and research to contribute to innovation. **2.3.2** Improved identification and addressing of institutional barriers that prevent talent, research and technologies from progressing towards innovation, validation, commercialisation and industrial application.
3. Ecosystem Integration: Increased integration of HEIs into manufacturing and deep-tech innovation ecosystems	**3.1** Strengthened strategic partnerships with industry and innovation actors	**3.1.1** Strengthened strategic partnerships between HEIs and companies, SMEs, start-ups, research organisations, technology centres and other relevant innovation actors to support manufacturing and deep-tech innovation. **3.1.2** Strengthened capacity of HEIs and their partners to collaborate across sectors and disciplines, share expertise and infrastructure, and respond jointly to emerging industrial and innovation needs.
	3.2 Increased access to markets, investment and innovation infrastructure	**3.2.1** Increased HEI access to industry environments, testing and demonstration facilities, pilots, technology infrastructures, market knowledge and other external

		resources needed to validate and advance manufacturing and deep-tech innovations. 3.2.2 Strengthened connections to investors, entrepreneurs, accelerators, incubators and other finance and business support actors, improving investment readiness and access to routes for exploitation, commercialisation and scale-up.
	3.3 Strengthened participation of HEIs in regional and European innovation ecosystems	3.3.1 Increased integration of HEIs into regional and European innovation ecosystems, including EIT KICs and other relevant networks and initiatives, expanding access to expertise, partnerships, opportunities and complementary innovation support. 3.3.2 Sustained cross-regional and European collaborations strengthening the integration of HEIs into manufacturing and deep-tech value chains and innovation networks, particularly where these create opportunities for less-connected institutions and regions. 3.3.3 Increased connectivity and complementarity with relevant European innovation and entrepreneurship instruments, where appropriate, strengthening pathways from research and innovation to validation, commercialisation and scale-up. This may include instruments such as the European Innovation Council (EIC), European Research Council (ERC) Proof of Concept grants, and the Interregional Innovation Investments (I3) Instrument, as well as other relevant European, national or regional initiatives.

2.4. Intervention Framework and Funded Actions

Project activities must be designed in response to the institutional needs, maturity, and priorities of all participating HEIs and must provide a clear pathway towards the objectives and expected results of the Call. Each HEI must complete the HEInnovate self-assessment[26], with results no more than six months old at the point of application submission. HEInnovate provides a baseline for identifying institutional strengths, gaps and priorities and informs the consortium's Innovation Vision Action Plan (IVAP).

[26] HEInnovate tool: https://www.heinnovate.eu/en

2.4.1. HEInnovate self-assessment and identification of institutional priorities

Each participating HEI is required to complete the self-assessment[27]. Applicants should use the results to identify the institutional needs and priorities where EIT HEI support can generate the greatest added value.

The results of the self-assessment should inform the development of the project proposal, which constitutes the consortium's IVAP. The IVAP should set out the consortium's long-term vision for institutional and systemic change and provide a strategic basis for the project's activities. It must demonstrate:

- the key institutional needs and priorities identified through the self-assessment
- how these needs relate to the Policy Objectives and relevant Specific Objectives and Sub-objectives
- the activities proposed to address these needs
- the expected outputs and results
- how these results are expected to contribute to sustainable institutional transformation and the overall aim of the Call

2.4.2. EIT HEI Impact Domains and Funded Actions

HEInnovate assesses each participating HEI as an institution, providing an eight-dimension self-diagnostic that informs the consortium's own roadmap and Innovation Vision Action Plan (IVAP). In contrast, the EIT HEI Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework operates at Initiative level, providing a common framework for monitoring and learning across all funded projects and cohorts[28]. Within this framework, the five Impact Domains organise the main areas of intervention supported by the EIT HEI and enable evidence to be aggregated across consortia for EIT accountability and portfolio-level learning.

The Impact Domains are not additional Policy Objectives. Rather, they provide the established intervention framework through which projects address their identified institutional needs and contribute to the Policy Objectives and Specific Objectives of the Call. Within each Domain, Funded Actions define the specific types of intervention that projects may select and implement according to their institutional context, maturity and priorities. A Funded Action may contribute to more than one Specific Objective or Policy Objective, reflecting the interconnected nature of talent development, institutional capacity and ecosystem integration. The Policy Objectives, Specific Objectives and Sub-objectives referenced in this section are specific to the EIT HEI Call 2026 and are not part of the terminology of the EIT HEI MEL Framework, which organises its results framework around Impact Domains, Signs of Change, Outcomes and Impact. They

[27] Please see the EIT HEI Call 2026 Project Design and Implementation Guide: https://eit-hei.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/10/EIT-HEI-Call-2026-Project-Design-and-Implementation-Guide.pdf for more information on how to complete the self-assessment.
[28] Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Framework: https://eit-hei.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/D7.7-MEL-Framework_EIT-HEI_V01_30062025-2.pdf

provide a Call-specific framework for defining the changes that projects are expected to contribute to through the established Domain and Funded Action structure.

The five Impact Domains cover:

1. **Fostering leadership support and institutional change** – strengthening the institutional conditions, leadership engagement and structures needed to embed innovation and entrepreneurship within HEIs.
2. **Strengthening partnerships and networks** – developing strategic connections between HEIs and external organisations, including industry, research and other innovation actors.
3. **Supporting innovation and business generation** – strengthening institutional capacity for innovation-driven research, knowledge valorisation, technology transfer and entrepreneurship.
4. **Enhancing innovation and entrepreneurship education** – developing the competences, curricula, training and experiential learning opportunities needed to strengthen innovation and entrepreneurship among STEM talent.
5. **Sharing knowledge and success** – capturing, sharing and transferring project experience, results and good practices across the EIT HEI portfolio and Community.

Selection of Funded Actions

All projects must select eight Funded Actions, and no more, according to the following requirements:

- At least one Funded Action must be selected from each of Domains 1 – 4.
- Two additional Funded Actions must be selected from Domains 1 – 4 according to the consortium's institutional needs and priorities.
- Both Funded Actions under Domain 5 must be selected by all projects.

The selection of Funded Actions must be driven by the institutional needs and priorities identified through the HEInnovate self-assessment and IVAP, rather than by a requirement to cover all Impact Domains or predefined areas of activity. Applicants must demonstrate a clear line of sight between:

institutional needs → Policy and Specific Objectives → selected Funded Actions and activities → outputs → expected results → sustainable institutional change.

The Funded Actions therefore provide the mechanism for implementing the intervention, while the Policy Objectives and Specific Objectives define the changes that the intervention is intended to achieve. The common Impact Domain and Funded Action framework also provides continuity across EIT HEI Calls and cohorts, enabling consistent monitoring, portfolio-level learning and the identification, sharing and transfer of effective approaches and good practices.

The table below sets out the five Impact Domains and their associated Funded Actions and their primary contributions to the Call's Specific Objectives and Sub-objectives[29].

Impact Domain	Funded Action	Primary contribution to Sub-Objectives
Domain 1: Fostering leadership support and institutional change	Secure and maintain institutional engagement for the implementation of the IVAP, especially among HEI leadership and its strategy.	2.2
	Enhance the scale and scope of student engagement activities, including improving student support offices to advise on entrepreneurship and innovation.	1.1 and 1.3
	Develop inter- and multi-disciplinary support, incentive and collaboration structures (including digital infrastructure) to foster innovation.	2.2 and 2.3
Domain 2: Strengthening partnerships and networks	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.	3.1 and 3.3
	Build partnering capacities among staff and facilitate networking and connections with partners.	3.1
Domain 3: Supporting Innovation and Business Generation	Develop and utilise structures and conditions for people to create or develop their businesses and start-ups, and to transfer technology.	2.1 and 3.2
	Create structures and conditions for innovation-driven research.	2.1 and 2.3
Domain 4: Enhancing innovation and entrepreneurship education	Develop or improve the innovation and entrepreneurial curricula.	1.1 and 1.3
	Develop innovation and entrepreneurial training programmes and mentoring schemes for staff and students.	1.1 and 1.2
	Organise internships in businesses.	1.2

[29] A list of illustrative activities can be found in the EIT HEI Call 2026 Project Design and Implementation Guide: https://eit-hei.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/10/EIT-HEI-Call-2026-Project-Design-and-Implementation-Guide.pdf and examples will be presented during the EIT HEI MEL Framework and Impact Domains and Funded Actions information session (see Section 13.1). However, these illustrative activities are non-exhaustive; projects are encouraged to design activities according to consortium context and identified institutional needs, and in line with the Call Objectives and Sub-Objectives.

	Provide up-skilling opportunities to businesses, especially SMEs.	3.1
	Assessment of teaching and learning practices.	1.3
Domain 5: Sharing knowledge and success	Collect and share success stories and lessons with others.	Horizontal across all Objectives
	Engage in joint activities with other EIT Higher Education Initiative project partners via the EIT HEI Community.	Horizontal across all Objectives

2.5. KPI Architecture and Requirements

The EIT HEI Call 2026 uses the KPI architecture established in the EIT Impact Framework[30]. The KPIs provide a common quantitative basis for measuring selected outputs and results of project implementation and complement the broader qualitative and institutional evidence collected through the EIT HEI MEL Framework.

The KPI architecture for the EIT HEI Call 2026 comprises two complementary levels:

- Project-level **EIT HEI KPIs and EIT Core KPIs** measure selected outputs and results generated through funded projects and provide quantitative evidence of progress within the EIT HEI intervention logic. There are four mandatory EIT HEI KPIs and projects must choose and deliver on at least one EIT Core KPI by the end of their funding period.
- **The EIT STEM Education Strategic Plan target** represents an Initiative-level contribution to a wider EU and EIT strategic objective. EIT HEI projects contribute to this target through activities that develop innovation, entrepreneurship and IP management competences among STEM learners and staff.

The relationship between activities, KPIs and the intended results of the Call is established through the project's intervention logic. Funded Actions are expected to generate outputs and results that contribute to the Call's Policy Objectives and Specific Objectives. The applicable KPIs provide quantitative evidence for selected elements of this pathway, while the IVAP, qualitative evidence and the MEL Framework capture broader institutional and ecosystem-level change that cannot be adequately represented through quantitative KPIs alone.

Applicants must therefore demonstrate in their IVAP how their proposed activities are expected to generate the outputs and results required to achieve the applicable KPI targets and how these results contribute to the objectives of the Call. KPI achievement should be understood as evidence of progress

[30] EIT Impact Framework 2022 – 2027: https://eit.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eit_impact_framework_2022-2027.pdf

within the wider intervention logic, rather than as a substitute for institutional transformation or longer-term impact.

KPI requirements

KPI targets are set and results are reported at project level, and the achievement of these targets is the responsibility of the consortium. Applicants should therefore ensure that their proposed activities and IVAP provide a credible pathway towards achieving the required KPI targets.

The KPI requirements are set out in the tables found in Sections 2.5.2, 2.5.3, and 2.5.4, which specify the KPIs and their minimum targets. The IVAP must demonstrate that the proposed project can achieve these minimum targets, based on the planned activities, institutional context and consortium capacity.

The EIT HEI Call 2026 does not set minimum annual KPI targets. Consortia are required to plan their KPI contributions on a calendar-year basis and will be expected to deliver on the commitments stated in their application.

Further information on each EIT KPI, including definitions and the structured data and supporting evidence required to substantiate achievement, is provided in the EIT Impact Framework[31].

2.5.1. Contribution to the STEM Education Strategic Plan target

A key contribution of the EIT HEI is to deliver on the EIT STEM Education Strategic Plan target of training 200,000 STEM students and staff in innovation, entrepreneurship and intellectual property (IP) management by 2028. The EIT HEI contribution is cumulative across the active and future EIT HEI cohorts: EIT HEI Call 2024 (Cohort 4), EIT HEI Call 2025 (Cohort 5) and EIT HEI Call 2026 (future Cohort 6). Together, these cohorts are expected to deliver on the target through the training and talent-development activities delivered by their funded projects.

For this Call, STEM is defined in alignment with the STEM Education Strategic Plan, which "broadly covers the fields of education 'Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics (05)', 'Information and Communication Technologies (06)' and 'Engineering, manufacturing and construction (07)' of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED)[32], as well as related interdisciplinary fields and studies." Applicants may also refer to this Eurostat publication[33] for detailed descriptions of each field.

Applying consortia must therefore have access to a significant pool of STEM students and staff in disciplines relevant to the focus areas of this Call: manufacturing and deep tech.

[31] EIT Impact Framework 2022 – 2027: https://eit.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eit_impact_framework_2022-2027.pdf
[32] https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000219109
[33] https://circabc.europa.eu/sd/a/286ebac6-aa7c-4ada-a42b-ff2cf3a442bf/ISCED-F%25202013%2520-%2520Detailed%2520field%2520descriptions.pdf

Applicants must design their projects with sufficient scale and ambition to contribute to the 200,000 target. The proposed Funded Actions, target groups, delivery model and KPI commitments should demonstrate a credible pathway to reaching the required number of STEM learners and staff, while ensuring that training meaningfully develops innovation, entrepreneurship and IP competences rather than simply maximising participant numbers.

This contribution is reflected in the mandatory KPI requirements set out in the sections below. Achievement of the relevant KPI targets is the responsibility of each funded consortium. Applicants should therefore ensure that their IVAP and implementation approach provide a credible basis for delivering their committed contribution during the funding period.

2.5.2. Mandatory KPI Requirements

The four mandatory EIT HEI KPI requirements are set out below. Applicants must achieve the minimum total target specified for each KPI requirement during the project funding period of 1 May 2027 to 31 October 2028.

KPI Code	KPI Description	Minimum Total Target
EITHE03.1 and/or EITHE04.1	START-UP CREATION AND DEVELOPMENT Projects must contribute to the creation and/or development of start-ups through one or both of the following KPIs.* **EITHE03.1** – Number of start-ups and scale-ups supported: Number of start-ups and scale-ups supported by the EIT HEI project for at least two months, provided the services contribute to the company's growth (including potential growth). Examples of such services include mentoring, consultancy on access to finance and markets, product/service marketing, legal advice, internationalisation and matchmaking. Specific Criteria: • The services should be provided for a total period of at least two months. **EITHE04.1** – Number of start-ups established: Number of start-ups established in year N as a result/based on the outputs of the EIT HEI project, or start-ups created for the purpose of an innovation project to organise and support the development of an asset.	4 combined

	**Projects may select EITHE03.1, EITHE04.1, or a combination of both, according to the nature, maturity and intervention model of the project. Where both KPIs are used, the same start-up should not be double counted.*	
EITHE08.1	EDUCATION AND TRAINING **EITHE08.1** – Number of successful participants in professional development courses, online training courses and other education/training activities delivered by the EIT HEI project. Specific Criteria: • All training must foster innovation, entrepreneurship and IP management capacities among students, academics and staff enrolled/working in relevant STEM fields. • All training programmes must consist of a minimum of 10 learning hours. • Projects must achieve minimum KPI results across three participant categories: students, academic staff and non-academic staff. The distribution across the three categories should be determined by the project according to its intervention model and target groups. • Only participants who successfully complete the programme will be counted. • Eligible activities must have clearly defined learning outcomes and a competency assessment method. *The 2,200 minimum project-level target represents a minimum contribution; applicants are encouraged/expected to set higher targets where justified by the size and capacity of their STEM talent pool, with the aggregate contribution of Call 2026 expected to make a substantial contribution to the EU STEM Education Strategic Plan's 200,000 target.*	2,200
EITHE19.1	INSTITUTIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE **EITHE19.1** – Number of new and/or improved structures and mechanisms established in or mobilised by HEIs participating in the EIT HEI project with an objective to support innovation and/or entrepreneurship. Examples include innovation testbeds, units, programmes, physical spaces, infrastructures and other institutional support mechanisms.	4
EITHE20	PARTNERSHIPS AND ECOSYSTEM INTEGRATION	4

	EITHE20 – Number of new partnerships established as a result of the EIT HEI Initiative project. This indicator has two sub-indicators, of which only one needs to be fulfilled: • EITHE20.1 – Number of new partnerships established by participating HEIs and businesses, research organisations and other actors; or • EITHE20.2 – Number and percentage of HEIs participating in other activities of the KICs. For both sub-indicators, partnerships must strengthen the connection and integration of the project and its partners with other innovation and entrepreneurship actors and/or initiatives.	

2.5.3. Optional EIT HEI KPI

Projects may also report the optional EIT HEI KPI below where it is relevant to their project activities and intervention model. No minimum target is required.

KPI Code	KPI Description	Minimum Total Target
OPTIONAL – EITHE01.1	INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS AND INNOVATION OUTPUTS **EITHE01.1** – Number of innovative products, processes and methods and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) applications resulting from EIT HEI project activities. Where appropriate to the project scope, consortia may report innovative products, processes and methods and/or IPR applications resulting from activities supported through the EIT HEI project. This may include, for example, innovations or IPR emerging from research, technology transfer, innovation-driven projects or other project activities. Projects should provide the supporting information required under the relevant EIT KPI definition to demonstrate the link between the reported output and the EIT HEI project.	No minimum target – optional KPI

2.5.4. EIT Core KPI requirement

In addition, a minimum of one of the following EIT Core KPIs must be achieved during the project funding period. The planned year of achievement must be stated in the application (recommended 2028, to allow full funding period for delivery).

KPI Code	KPI Description	Minimum Total Target
EITHE02.4	INNOVATIONS LAUNCHED ON THE MARKET **EITHE02.4** – Number of innovations introduced on the market during the EIT HEI project duration or within three years after completion, with documented sales revenue of at least EUR 10,000. Innovations introduced on the market must be directly linked with the EIT HEI project and reported in the year when they reached their first revenue.	1
EITHE04.4	START-UPS ESTABLISHED **EITHE04.4** – Number of start-ups established in year N as a result of, or based on, the outputs of the EIT HEI project, or start-ups created for the purpose of an innovation project to organise and support the development of an asset, that have either generated at least EUR 10,000 in financial transactions from the sale of services or products resulting from the EIT HEI project, or raised at least EUR 200,000 through private investment in start-up equity.	1
EITHE06.1	CAPITAL ATTRACTED **EITHE06.1** – Total EUR amount of private and public capital attracted in year N by supported start-ups/scale-ups (per country) that have received EIT HEI project support for a total duration of at least two months.	EUR 10,000

3. Project Design and Implementation Requirements

Projects must be designed and implemented as part of the wider EIT HEI portfolio and Community. They are expected to use relevant programme-level expertise, support, training, monitoring, peer learning, networks and EIT ecosystem opportunities, and to contribute relevant knowledge, results and experience

to the wider EIT HEI Community. Detailed guidance and examples for meeting the requirements below are provided in the EIT HEI Project Design and Implementation Guide[34].

3.1. HEI Leadership and Institutional Engagement

The lead partner must be an eligible HEI. Participating HEIs must demonstrate meaningful institutional engagement and involve the relevant faculties, departments, services and leadership structures required to implement and sustain the proposed changes.

The IVAP must demonstrate:

- alignment with participating HEIs' strategic priorities
- institutional commitment to the proposed objectives and activities
- engagement of relevant institutional structures and staff
- how project results will be embedded and sustained beyond the funding period, including through strategies, policies, curricula, support structures, processes or investment plans, where appropriate

A **top management commitment letter from all HEI partners is required** as part of the application. The letter must confirm leadership support, alignment with institutional priorities, and commitment to implementing and sustaining the proposed changes. Applicants must use the template provided in the supporting documents.

3.2. Knowledge Triangle Integration

Consortia should integrate the three pillars of the EIT Knowledge Triangle: **education, research and business**, bringing together complementary expertise and organisation types relevant to the proposed objectives and activities. Participation requirements are set out in Section 4.

Projects must demonstrate how the consortium will contribute to a coherent progression from talent and knowledge development to innovation, application and uptake, including, where relevant, through:

- connections between education and real-world industrial and innovation challenges
- collaboration between students, educators, researchers and industry
- knowledge valorisation, technology transfer and innovation-driven entrepreneurship
- access to relevant expertise, infrastructure, pilot environments, investment and markets
- connections to regional, national and European innovation ecosystems

[34] Please see the EIT HEI Call 2026 Project Design and Implementation Guide: https://eit-hei.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/10/EIT-HEI-Call-2026-Project-Design-and-Implementation-Guide.pdf

The IVAP must define partner roles and responsibilities and demonstrate how the consortium's combined capabilities contribute to the project's objectives and expected results.

3.3. Connection and alignment with the EIT KICs and EIT Community

Projects must establish meaningful connections with the EIT Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) and the wider EIT Community. Applications must identify **a minimum of two and a maximum of three EIT KICs** relevant to the proposed project, based on the KIC briefs provided as supporting documents. Applicants must explain the relevance and added value of the selected KICs, the expertise, networks, programmes or assets they intend to access, and how these connections may be sustained beyond the project.

KIC engagement may include relevant methodologies and educational practices, expertise and innovation challenges, industry and research networks and infrastructures, knowledge valorisation and technology transfer, entrepreneurship and investment opportunities, and connections to regional and European innovation ecosystems. KIC engagement is a two-way relationship: projects should benefit from the EIT Community while contributing their own knowledge, results, networks and capabilities.

EIT KICs will not participate as funded beneficiaries. Following project selection, each project will be allocated to one participating EIT KIC for project management purposes. Applicants' preferences will be considered but do not guarantee allocation. Allocation will also take account of balanced distribution across KICs and their capacity to manage the awarded portfolio.

The allocated KIC will act as the primary interface between the consortium and the EIT HEI, providing contractual management, implementation support, monitoring and reporting, and facilitating access to relevant KIC expertise, networks, and opportunities. See Section 11.5, EIT KIC Allocation Procedure.

3.4. Building on Previous EIT HEI and Other Relevant Activities

The Projects should build on relevant existing capabilities, results, and lessons rather than duplicate activities supported through previous EIT HEI funding. Previous EIT HEI participants are eligible to apply, including with the same consortium, provided that the proposal demonstrates clear **additionality** and does not simply continue or replicate previously funded activities.

Organisations funded under EIT HEI Call 2025 and participating as beneficiaries in an active EIT HEI Cohort 5 project are not eligible to apply as funded beneficiaries to this EIT HEI Call 2026[35]; they are eligible to apply as Associated Partners (non-funded). Organisations participating as Associated Partners (non-funded) in an active EIT HEI Cohort 5 project are eligible to apply to this EIT HEI Call 2026 as Beneficiaries (funded)

[35] List of participating organisations in projects selected under the EIT HEI Call 2025: https://eit-hei.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/10/HEI_EIT_Participating-Orgs_Full-Document-2026_v3.pdf

and/or Associated Partners (non-funded). See Section 4.3 on previous EIT HEI project partner participation requirements.

Organisations with previous EIT HEI experience are referred to within the EIT HEI Community as Innovation and Entrepreneurship Pioneers and are expected, where relevant, to contribute through peer learning, knowledge sharing and mentorship.

Previous EIT HEI beneficiaries should demonstrate, where relevant, how they will:

- scale or institutionalise successful approaches
- address remaining institutional or ecosystem gaps
- apply lessons learned in new contexts or to new target groups and partners
- connect previously separate activities or capabilities
- transfer knowledge and experience to less experienced partners and the wider EIT HEI Community

Projects may also build on relevant European, national, regional or institutional initiatives and should explain the additional value provided by EIT HEI support.

3.5. EIT HEI Portfolio and Community Integration and Participation

Projects must engage at project, portfolio and Community levels, using relevant portfolio and Community opportunities to strengthen implementation and share relevant knowledge, results and resources to support learning, transfer and replication.

Each funded project must:

1. **Appoint a Community Officer** responsible for coordinating participation in portfolio and Community activities and contributions to the wider Community.
2. **Develop a Community Engagement Plan (mandatory deliverable) by month 3** (31 July 2027), setting out the project's approach, responsibilities, planned contributions and relevant resources. The Plan may be updated during implementation. This is required as a mandatory deliverable.
3. **Participate in relevant portfolio-level activities** throughout the funding period.
4. **Contribute to the wider EIT HEI Community** through at least two of the three Community contribution areas and **submit at least two success stories and two good practices** through the EIT HEI Community platform during the funding period.

The Community Engagement Plan must identify the Community Officer and relevant roles, the approach to participation, planned contributions and timing, knowledge and resources that may be shared subject to IP and confidentiality requirements, and the resources required. The EIT HEI management team will agree with the final contribution plan with each project during implementation, taking into account project expertise and results, available resources and wider portfolio needs.

The EIT HEI management team will provide portfolio-level activities for Cohort 6, including capacity building, collective learning and sensemaking, expert support, peer exchange, networking and connections

to relevant EIT and European innovation ecosystem opportunities. Participation in relevant portfolio-level activities is an implementation obligation.

Planned EIT HEI Cohort 6 activities include:

- **IVAP Workshop:** 2.5-day *in-person* event; mandatory participation of a minimum of four representatives per project – Q3/Q4 2027.
- **System Innovation Training:** approximately ten days of *blended* training, primarily online asynchronous learning open to the entire consortium in Q3/Q4 2027, plus one in-person workshop for up to two representatives per project in Q1 2028.
- **Cohort 6 Co-creation Workshop Series:** two half-day *online* workshops, open to the entire consortium – Q3 2027 and Q2 2028.
- **KIC Discovery Days:** two half-day *online* events, open to the entire consortium – Q4 2027 and Q3 2028.
- **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion training:** approximately 15 hours of training (TBC), delivered through asynchronous and synchronous online learning – Q3/Q4 2027.
- **Preparing for Investment with Creative Innovation:** five 1.5-hour *online* sessions – indicatively Q4 2027 and Q1 2028.
- **Cohort 6 Sensemaking:** 2.5-day *in-person* event; mandatory participation of two representatives per project – Q2 2028.
- **EIT HEI Community events:** participation in one of up to three annual *in-person* events bringing together the wider Community.
- **Online Community webinars and thematic activities:** ongoing opportunities covering topics such as intellectual property rights, cross-sector collaboration and partnerships, institutional pipelines and related subjects.

Precise dates and any additional participation requirements will be communicated to funded projects in due course. Applicants must therefore ensure that appropriate staff time and resources are available, including eligible costs associated with participation in in-person EIT HEI activities.

The three Community contribution areas are:

- Community Events and Knowledge Exchange
- Training and Learning Resources
- Replicable Practices and Tools

Examples and possible formats for each contribution area are provided in the EIT HEI Call 2026 Project Design and Implementation Guide[36]. The quality and relevance of the proposed approach to portfolio and Community engagement will form part of the formal proposal assessment.

3.6. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL)

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) is an integral part of the EIT HEI approach, supporting project performance, accountability, and portfolio-level learning. Projects must monitor progress against their approved objectives, Funded Actions, KPI commitments, and provide the evidence required to demonstrate achievement. They must also participate in EIT HEI portfolio-level monitoring, review and learning activities during and at the end of the funding period.

MEL will combine quantitative and qualitative evidence across Impact Domains, Funded Actions and KPIs to assess progress, identify effective and transferable approaches, support reflection and sensemaking, and inform portfolio-level learning. Further requirements for monitoring, reporting, evidence and participation in MEL activities are set out in the EIT HEI MEL Framework[37].

3.7. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), including gender equality, must be embedded throughout project design, implementation and governance. Projects should demonstrate how their activities will support inclusive access to innovation, entrepreneurship and IP capacity building and contribute to a diverse talent base and inclusive manufacturing and deep-tech innovation ecosystems. This reflects EU priorities on inclusive skills development, equal participation in STEM and inclusive innovation ecosystems, including the Union of Skills[38], STEM Education Strategic Plan[39], and the EU Gender Equality Strategy[40].

Each project must develop a DEI Value Statement and Action Plan as part of its IVAP, setting out its DEI ambition, priorities and concrete measures across activities, institutional interventions, governance and partnerships. Details on what the Action Plan should address can be found in the EIT HEI Project Design and Implementation Guide[41]. **The DEI Value Statement and Action Plan is required as a mandatory project deliverable, due in month 3 of the project.**

At the consortium level, a balanced gender representation among project staff, including at management level, is required.

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[36] Please see the EIT HEI Call 2026 Project Design and Implementation Guide: https://eit-hei.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/10/EIT-HEI-Call-2026-Project-Design-and-Implementation-Guide.pdf
[37] Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Framework
[38] https://commission.europa.eu/topics/competitiveness/union-skills_en
[39] https://education.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2025-03/STEM_Education_Strategic_Plan_COM_2025_89_1_EN_0.pdf
[40] https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy_en
[41] Please see the EIT HEI Call 2026 Project Design and Implementation Guide: https://eit-hei.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/10/EIT-HEI-Call-2026-Project-Design-and-Implementation-Guide.pdf

4. Consortium and Participation Requirements

4.1. General Participation Requirements

To be considered eligible, applications must comply with the following general participation requirements:

- All beneficiaries (funded partners) must register in the EU Participant Register before submitting their application, in order to obtain a Participant Identification Code (PIC)[42].
- Proposals must be submitted by a consortium comprising at least five beneficiaries.
- An organisation may participate as a funded beneficiary in **only one application submitted under this Call**.
- The same organisation may participate in additional proposals only as an Associated Partner.
- Where more than one proposal is submitted with the same organisation as a beneficiary, only the first proposal submitted through the application portal will be considered eligible. If the first proposal is subsequently found to be ineligible under any other eligibility criterion, the second proposal will be considered eligible, provided that it meets all other eligibility requirements.

The types of organisations eligible for participation and funding are:

- Higher and vocational education organisations
  - Higher Education Institutions (HEIs): institutions offering recognised degrees or other tertiary-level qualifications, and other comparable institutions at tertiary level where recognised by their national authorities. Each HEI must provide proof of accreditation by the relevant national authority to offer recognised degrees
  - Vocational Education and Training (VET) providers
- Research and knowledge-transfer organisations
  - Research institutes and organisations
  - Knowledge Transfer Offices (KTOs) and Technology Transfer Offices (TTOs), either as organisational units within eligible HEIs or research organisations, or as separate legal entities where applicable
- Industry and business organisations
  - Businesses (private or public; small, medium-sized or large enterprises)
  - Associations and networks representing industry, business and innovation organisations
  - Social enterprises
- Public, intermediary and civil-society organisations
  - Public bodies at local, regional or national level
  - Intermediary organisations or associations representing Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)
  - Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)

[42] https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/how-to-participate/participant-register

4.2. Consortium Composition Eligibility Criteria

Required role	Minimum requirement	Required sub-criteria
Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)	Minimum 3 HEIs	Based in three different Horizon Europe eligible countries
		At least one HEI must be based in a Member State
		Each HEI must involve at least two faculties, departments, units or equivalent (manufacturing-related strongly encouraged)
		Lead partner / Project Coordinator must be an HEI
Business/Industry partners and/or business/industry representative organisations (public or private)	Minimum 2 business/industry partners and/or business/industry representative organisations (private or public)	May include SMEs, start-ups, larger enterprises, or industry representative organisations such as industry associations
		Business/industry partners that operate in manufacturing or industrial technologies strongly encouraged

4.3. Previous EIT HEI Project Partner Participation

Generally, organisations that have previously participated in EIT HEI projects may apply, though proposals should demonstrate clear additionality and should not simply continue previously funded activities.

However, organisations funded under EIT HEI Call 2025 and participating as beneficiaries in an active EIT HEI Cohort 5 project are not eligible to apply as funded beneficiaries to this EIT HEI Call 2026[43]; they are eligible to apply as Associated Partners (non-funded). Organisations participating as Associated Partners (non-funded) in an active EIT HEI Cohort 5 project are eligible to apply to this EIT HEI Call 2026 as Beneficiaries (funded) and/or Associated Partners (non-funded). See Section 4.3 on previous EIT HEI project partner participation requirements.

[43] List of participating organisations in projects selected under the EIT HEI Call 2025: https://eit-hei.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/10/HEI_EIT_Participating-Orgs_Full-Document-2026_v3.pdf

The EIT HEI Call 2025 – which awarded 35 successful projects running from 1 September 2026 to 31 August 2028 – already supports projects focused on strengthening innovation, entrepreneurship and related institutional capacity in STEM, which substantially overlaps with the scope and objectives of this Call. This eligibility restriction is intended to ensure a clear separation between the two funding interventions, mitigate the risk of duplication or double funding of the same or substantially similar activities and costs, and broaden the overall reach and impact of the EIT HEI portfolio.

5. Financial and Operational Aspects of the EIT HEI Call 2026

5.1. Project Duration

The duration of the projects selected under the EIT HEI Call for Proposals 2026 is 18 months. The funding period will start on 1 May 2027 and will finish on 31 October 2028.

5.2. Available Budget

The total budget earmarked for the financing of projects under this call for proposals is estimated at EUR 40,000,000. This budget is subject to the funding allocation decision of the EIT Governing Board expected in November 2026 and the corresponding amendment to the Grant Agreement between EIT and the EIT Higher Education Initiative consortium.

We reserve the right to increase the total available funds, if further budget becomes available before the final decision on the award of the subgrants to the selected projects. Such an increase of the budget will be transparently communicated to the applicants on the call website.

We reserve the right not to award all available funds, subject to the proposals received and the results of the evaluation.

5.3. Form of Grant, Funding Rate and Maximum Grant Amount

The grant parameters (maximum grant amount, funding rate, total eligible costs, etc.) will be fixed in the Project Grant Agreement (PGA) signed between the allocated EIT KIC and the project consortium.

The project budget (maximum grant amount) is up to 1,250,000 EUR per project. Applicants will be asked to plan their budget – and associated activities and KPIs – on a calendar-year basis. The grant awarded may be lower than the amount requested. The amount will be fixed by the allocated EIT KIC on the basis of the estimated project budget and a funding rate of 100%.

Projects selected under this Call will receive a pre-financing payment corresponding to 25% of the total grant amount to support the timely start of project implementation. During the implementation period, beneficiaries will submit one interim report at the midpoint and one final report. Subject to the approval of the interim report, the corresponding payment will be transferred within 30 days. The balance payment

will be made within 30 days following the EIT's balance payment to the EIT Higher Education Initiative Coordinator after approval of the Initiative's final report. Payment arrangements and reporting requirements will be further specified in the EIT HEI Project Grant Agreement. Beneficiaries are expected to manage funds responsibly and in full compliance with Horizon Europe and EU financial regulations.

5.4. Timeline and deadlines

Call Stage	Deadlines (indicative)
Call opening	20 October 2026
Deadline for submission	13 January 2027, 17:00:00 CET
Evaluation	14 January – 19 March 2027
Information on evaluation results	Week of 22 March 2027
Project Agreement Preparation stage	April 2027
Expected project start date	1 May 2027
Expected project end date	31 October 2028

5.5. Eligibility of Costs

EIT HEI Projects are part of Horizon Europe. General funding and cost eligibility regulations follow the Horizon Europe Regulation[44] and are governed by the Horizon Europe Grant Agreement[45] (annotations can be found in the HE Annotated Model Grant Agreement (AGA)[46]). The funding rate that applies to the EIT HEI Projects selected for funding is up to 100%. The grant can only reimburse eligible costs (i.e. costs that comply with the general and specific conditions set out in Article 6 of the AGA).

Funding will be provided through the reimbursement of eligible costs actually incurred by beneficiaries for the implementation of the action. Beneficiaries must declare eligible costs in accordance with the applicable funding rules and maintain adequate supporting records and documentation to demonstrate their eligibility. The following budget categories[47] apply to the EIT Higher Education Initiative Projects:

- Personnel costs
- Subcontracting costs
- Purchase costs
    - Travel and subsistence
    - Equipment
    - Other goods, works and services

[44] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021R0695&qid=1621434634235&from=EN
[45] https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/agr-contr/general-mga_horizon-euratom_en.pdf
[46] https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/aga_en.pdf
[47] The cost categories are aligned with the eligibility and reporting framework applicable to this Call. For implementation, monitoring and reporting purposes, the corresponding categories in the KIC management system may be presented under different labels, groupings or structures. Such administrative adaptations shall not affect the nature of the costs, their eligibility, or the applicable funding rules.

- Other cost categories
  - Financial support to third parties in the form of prizes[48]
  - Internally invoiced goods and services
- Indirect costs

The budget of the selected EIT HEI Call for Proposals 2026 projects will be based on the estimated costs to be incurred by the project activities; 100% of all eligible costs may be covered but co-funding is encouraged (though is not considered in the evaluation of proposals).

The funding requested must be justified in relation to the planned activities as described in the IVAP. All costs must be fully described and justified. The costs should be reasonable, justified and directly related to the achievement of the objectives of the EIT HEI and IVAP. Moreover, subcontracting must comply with EU public procurement rules.

5.6. Operational Model

The Project Grant Agreements (PGA) will be signed between the allocated EIT KIC and the project consortium[49]. Based on the different operational models found across the KICs, details may vary; this information will therefore be presented to the selected projects following the communication of their proposal being selected for funding (during the operational onboarding process). This means that for operational matters, the project will always deal directly with their assigned EIT KIC and must follow their operational policies and requirements. However, the EIT HEI projects are part of Horizon Europe, so general funding and cost eligibility regulations are governed by the Horizon Europe Model Grant Agreement (GA)[50], as outlined in Section 5.5.

The EIT HEI Call 2026 Model Project Agreement[51] outlines the basis project requirements and provisions – including the financial arrangements outlined in Section 5.3 – expected of awarded projects. The Project Agreement template is illustrative and certain operational elements are subject to change depending on the allocated KIC.

5.7. Intellectual Property Rights Rules

Selected EIT HEI projects, being projects funded under Horizon Europe, are governed by the Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) rules laid out in Article 16 of the Horizon Europe Model Grant Agreement (GA)[52].

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[48] When considering the Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP) cost category in your proposal, please ensure compliance with all applicable rules and requirements. In particular, beneficiaries must adhere to the provisions and guidance set out in Section D.1 "Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP)" of the Annotated Grant Agreement (AGA) [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/aga_en.pdf].

[49] This allocation process will be based on the proposal's EIT KIC alignment where possible, but it is not guaranteed that a project will be allocated to one of its two or three selected EIT KICs.

[50] https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/aga_en.pdf

[51] Illustrative Model Project Grant Agreement: https://eit-hei.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/10/Model-Project-Grant-Agreement-EIT-HEI-Call-2026.pdf

[52] https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/aga_en.pdf

5.8. Communication, Dissemination and Visibility Rules

Selected EIT HEI projects, being projects funded under Horizon Europe, must follow the communication, dissemination and visibility rules (including the branding guidelines and obligations) set out in Article 17 of the Horizon Europe Model Grant Agreement (GA)[53].

The communication infrastructure and all communication activities implemented by the project must comply with the branding guidelines for the EIT HEI. This means that all project-related content must include the logo of the EIT HEI and the logo of the EIT KIC the project is allocated to, with the following text: *"[EIT KIC name] is supported by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), a body of the European Union"*). The branding guidelines and all relevant branding assets (including logos, branded templates, etc.), will be shared with the selected projects during their onboarding process. **Projects must include a Dissemination and Communication Plan as a mandatory deliverable in their IVAP, due month 3 (31 July 2027).**

5.9. Data Management Rules

Selected EIT HEI projects will be required to follow the data management rules set out in Article 17.4 and Annex 5 of Horizon Europe Model Grant Agreement (GA)[54]. **Projects must prepare a Data Management Plan (DMP) in accordance with Horizon Europe guidelines as a mandatory deliverable, due in month 6.** The DMP must outline how the data generated during the project will be managed.

Project data will be included in the EIT Portal by the relevant KIC and will be accessed by the EIT / European Commission. In addition, project data will be included in the HE system (i.e. eCORDA) and will be accessible to Member States.

6. Admissibility criteria

- The proposal is submitted by the submission deadline indicated.
- The proposal is submitted via the submission platform indicated.
- The proposal is complete, i.e. all mandatory fields have been filled in.
- The proposal is submitted in English.

If a proposal is found to be inadmissible, it will not move forward to the eligibility check, based on the eligibility criteria[55], and the applicant will receive an official communication from the EIT HEI informing them of the outcome of the admissibility check and explaining why the proposal failed to meet the criteria.

[53] https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/aga_en.pdf
[54] https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/aga_en.pdf
[55] Please see Section 7: Eligibility criteria.

7. Eligibility Criteria

Following the admissibility check, only proposals complying with the following conditions will be considered eligible for further evaluation:

7.1. Entities eligible to participate

Any legal entity, regardless of its place of establishment, including legal entities from non-associated third countries is eligible to participate, provided that the conditions laid down in the Horizon Europe Regulation have been met (e.g. the entity is not under EU sanction), along with any other conditions laid down in the specific Call. For this call, a 'legal entity' means legal person created and recognised as such under national law, EU law or international law, which has legal personality and which may, acting in its own name, exercise rights and be subject to obligations, or an entity without legal personality.

Funded entities must register in the EU Participant Register before submitting their application, in order to obtain a Participant Identification Code (PIC)[56].

7.2. Eligibility for funding

In accordance with the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2026 - 2027[57], in order to be **eligible for funding**, the **applicant must be established in one of the eligible countries**, i.e.:

- the Member States of the European Union, including their outermost regions;
- the Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) linked to the Member States[58];
- countries associated to Horizon Europe[59];
- certain low- and middle-income countries[60].

Affiliated entities are eligible for funding if they are established in one of the countries listed above, or in a country identified in the Call.

Beneficiaries (BEN): A beneficiary is any legal entity that signs the Project Grant Agreement and undertakes to carry out part of the EIT HEI project. Beneficiaries are entitled to receive EU/EIT funding for their tasks and have full rights and obligations under the Project Grant Agreement, including technical implementation, financial management, and reporting.

Associated partners (AP): These are entities that are not able to or do not wish to participate as funded beneficiaries, but they may participate as associated partners.

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[56] https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/how-to-participate/participant-register

[57] https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2026-2027/wp-1-general-introduction_horizon-2026-2027_en.pdf

[58] Entities from Overseas Countries and Territories (OCT) are eligible for funding under the same conditions as entities from the Member States to which the OCT in question is linked. See the Horizon Europe Programme Guide on the portal for a complete list of OCTs.

[59] https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/list-3rd-country-participation_horizon-euratom_en.pdf

[60] See the Horizon Europe Programme Guide on the Funding and Tenders Portal for a complete list of these countries.

Consortia must fulfil all consortium composition requirements – as outlined in Section 4 – to be eligible for funding.

All Consortium and Participation Requirements listed in Section 4 of this Call text must be fulfilled in order for an application to be considered eligible for funding.

7.3. EU restrictions on participation

- **EU restrictive measures**: Entities subject to EU restrictive measures under Article 29 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU)[61] as well as Article 75 TFEU[62], are not eligible to participate in any capacity, including as beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners, third parties giving in-kind contributions, subcontractors or recipients of financial support to third parties (if any). Special rules also apply to entities covered by Commission Guidelines No 2013/C 205/0522[63].
- **Legal entities established in Russia, Belarus, or in non-government-controlled territories of Ukraine**: Given the illegal invasion of Ukraine by Russia and the involvement of Belarus, there is currently no appropriate context allowing the implementation of the actions foreseen in this programme with legal entities established in Russia, Belarus, or in non-government-controlled territories of Ukraine. Therefore, even where such entities are not subject to EU restrictive measures, such legal entities are not eligible to participate in any capacity. This includes participation as beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners, third parties giving in-kind contributions, subcontractors or recipients of financial support to third parties (if any). Exceptions may be granted on a case-by-case basis for justified reasons. With specific regard to measures addressed to Russia, following the adoption of the Council Regulation (EU) 2024/1745 of 24 June 2024[64] (amending Council Regulation (EU) No 833/2014 of 31 July 2014) concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine, legal entities established outside Russia but whose proprietary rights are directly or indirectly owned for more than 50% by a legal person, entity or body established in Russia are also not eligible to participate in any capacity.
- **Restrictions for the protection of European communication networks**: The protection of European communication networks has been identified as an important security interest of the Union and its

[61] Please note that the EU Official Journal contains the official list and, in case of conflict, its content prevails over that of the EU Sanctions Map
[62] Please note that the EU Official Journal contains the official list and, in case of conflict, its content prevails over that of the EU Sanctions Map
[63] Commission guidelines No 2013/C 205/05 on the eligibility of Israeli entities and their activities in the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967 for grants, prizes and financial instruments funded by the EU from 2014 onwards (OJEU C 205 of 19.07.2013, pp. 9-11)
[64] OJ L 229, 31.7.2014, p. 1–11

Member States[65]. For further information, please refer to the Horizon Europe, Work Programme 2026 General Annexes, B – Eligibility on page 14[66].

8. Exclusion and Rejection criteria

8.1. Exclusion criteria

Applicants will be excluded from participation in the Call and from the award if they are in one of the situations referred to in Article 138(1) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union. These situations include:

- The applicant is bankrupt, subject to insolvency or winding-up procedures, has entered into an arrangement with creditors, has suspended its business activities, or is in any analogous situation under applicable Union or national law.
- It has been established by a final judgment or final administrative decision that the applicant is in breach of its obligations relating to the payment of taxes or social security contributions.
- It has been established by a final judgment or final administrative decision that the applicant is guilty of grave professional misconduct, including, in particular, fraudulently or negligently misrepresenting relevant information, entering into agreements to distort competition, violating intellectual property rights, unduly influencing decision-making, attempting to obtain confidential information to gain an undue advantage, or inciting discrimination, hatred or violence in the circumstances specified in Article 138(1)(c).
- It has been established by a final judgment that the applicant is guilty of fraud, corruption, conduct related to a criminal organisation, money laundering or terrorist financing, terrorist offences or offences related to terrorist activities, child labour, or other offences concerning trafficking in human beings.
- The applicant has shown significant deficiencies in complying with its main obligations in the implementation of a legal commitment financed by the EU budget, where these deficiencies have led to early termination, the application of liquidated damages or other contractual penalties, or have been identified through checks, audits or investigations by the relevant authorities.
- It has been established by a final judgment or final administrative decision that the applicant has committed an irregularity within the meaning of Article 1(2) of Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 2988/95.
- It has been established by a final judgment or final administrative decision that the applicant has created an entity in another jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal

[65] European Council conclusions of 1 and 2 October 2020 (EUCO 13/20), point 11; Council Conclusions on the significance of 5G to the European Economy and the need to mitigate security risks linked to 5G, 14517/19.
[66] https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2026-2027/wp-15-general-annexes_horizon-2026-2027_en.pdf

obligations in the jurisdiction of its registered office, central administration or principal place of business, or that an entity has been created for this purpose.

- The applicant has intentionally and without proper justification resisted an investigation, check or audit carried out by the relevant EU authorities or their representatives, including the authorising officer, the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) or the European Court of Auditors.

The exclusion situations above shall be interpreted and applied in accordance with Article 138(1) of the EU Financial Regulation, including the applicable evidentiary requirements.

- Have misrepresented the information required as a condition for participating in the procedure or have failed to supply that information; or
- Were previously involved in the preparation of documents used in the award procedure where this entails a breach of the principle of equality of treatment, including distortion of competition, that cannot be remedied otherwise.

At submission stage, the Lead Partner shall submit the EIT HEI Declaration of Honour on behalf of the consortium (see Annex 13.2). If selected, each beneficiary will be required to sign the standard Declaration of Honour on exclusion criteria during the onboarding process. Failure to provide adequate documentation may result in the exclusion of the applicants concerned.

Successful applicants will go through the legal entity validation process of the Onboarding Service of the KICs (i.e. a shared service led by EIT Urban Mobility KIC). The Onboarding Service will request registration documents and a signed Declaration of honour from the successful applicant. The validation may also include a check of the successful applicants by the EIT in the Early Detection and Exclusion System (EDES) of the European Commission.

8.2. Rejection criteria

In accordance with Article 143 of the EU Financial Regulation, applicants may also be rejected from the award procedure where:

- They have misrepresented information required as a condition for participating in the procedure or have failed to provide that information.
- They were previously involved in the preparation of documents used in the award procedure, where this entails a breach of the principle of equal treatment, including distortion of competition, that cannot be remedied otherwise.

8.3. Declaration of Honour and legal entity validation

As evidence of compliance with the applicable exclusion criteria and the absence of conflicts of interest, the Coordinator and all proposed partners participating in the applicant consortium must submit a

Declaration of Honour on exclusion criteria and absence of conflict of interest. Failure to provide the required declaration or other necessary documentation may result in the exclusion or rejection of the applicant concerned, as applicable under the EU Financial Regulation.

Successful applicants will undergo the legal entity validation process carried out by the KICs' Onboarding Service, a shared service led by EIT Urban Mobility. Where the relevant documents have not been provided with the application, the Onboarding Service will request the necessary registration documents and a signed Declaration of Honour from the successful applicant. The validation process may also include checks by the EIT against the European Commission's Early Detection and Exclusion System (EDES).

9. Operational capacity

Applicants must demonstrate that they have the operational capacity, expertise, and resources required to implement the proposed project successfully and deliver the expected results. This should be supported by concrete, verifiable evidence, such as identified staff with relevant qualifications and experience, experience in projects of comparable scope and complexity, and access to the infrastructure, networks and other resources required for the proposed activities.

Given the scope of the Call, applicants should demonstrate that the consortium has the capacity to implement the combination of interventions selected in its IVAP and work plan and to contribute to the three Policy Objectives. Depending on the project's priorities, institutional context and level of maturity, relevant capabilities may include:

- Talent development: innovation, entrepreneurship and IP education; interdisciplinary and experiential learning; mentoring; challenge-based learning; and engagement with industry and other innovation actors.
- Institutional innovation capacity: institutional leadership and governance; innovation support structures; knowledge valorisation and technology transfer; IP management; entrepreneurship support; and connections between education, research and institutional innovation functions.
- Ecosystem integration: research-to-market pathways; industry and business engagement; technology validation and demonstration; access to innovation infrastructure; investment readiness; venture development; and connections to regional, European and international innovation ecosystems.

Applicants should also demonstrate access to the technical, industrial and innovation expertise, infrastructure and networks required to implement the proposed activities effectively. Where these capabilities are not available within the participating HEIs, they may be provided through other consortium members or relevant external partnerships, as appropriate.

This may include expertise and resources from:

- manufacturing companies, SMEs and start-ups
- research organisations, RTOs and technology centres

- technology transfer and innovation support organisations
- investors, accelerators, incubators and other business support actors
- regional innovation organisations and industrial clusters
- EIT KICs and other European innovation networks
- VET providers and other organisations contributing to relevant STEM talent development

Relevance to manufacturing and deep-tech innovation

Applications must demonstrate a clear and credible contribution to strengthening Europe's capacity for deep-tech innovation and its translation into manufacturing and industrial applications. This should be reflected in the needs, expertise, partnerships, activities and expected results of the participating organisations. Relevant capabilities may be demonstrated through the participation of:

- HEIs with relevant STEM education, research, innovation and entrepreneurship capabilities, including in engineering, manufacturing, deep-tech and other industrially relevant fields
- VET providers contributing relevant technical education, skills development or talent pathways;
- manufacturing companies, including SMEs, start-ups and larger enterprises
- research and technology organisations, technology centres and other organisations supporting technology development, validation, knowledge valorisation or technology transfer
- innovation ecosystem organisations, including regional innovation actors, investors, accelerators, incubators, EIT KICs and other organisations providing relevant expertise, infrastructure, finance, market access or other support for deep-tech innovation and entrepreneurship

The consortium should demonstrate that its combination of institutional capabilities, activities and strategic partnerships responds to relevant needs in deep-tech innovation and its translation into manufacturing and industrial applications. Applications should also demonstrate how these interventions are expected to strengthen institutional capacity, talent and ecosystem connections and generate sustainable results.

Capacity to deliver proposed results and KPIs

Applicants must demonstrate access to a sufficient pool of relevant participants to deliver the mandatory training KPI and other activities proposed. For EITHE08.1, the application should demonstrate that the proposed target is realistic in relation to the size and characteristics of participating HEIs and their target groups, including students, academic staff and non-academic staff.

For KPIs relating to start-up development, institutional structures, partnerships or other specific outputs, applicants should similarly demonstrate that the consortium has the relevant structures, networks and capacity to achieve the proposed targets.

Applicants must demonstrate that they have, or will have by the time of implementation, the necessary experience, know-how, qualifications, partnerships and operational resources to deliver the proposed activities and achieve the commitments set out in the application.

10. Financial capacity

Applicants must have stable and sufficient resources to successfully implement the projects and contribute to their share. In accordance with Article 27 of the Horizon Europe Regulation, the financial capacity shall be verified for the coordinator if the requested funding is equal to or greater than EUR 500 000. If there are grounds to doubt the financial capacity of an applicant, the allocated KIC shall also verify the financial capacity of the applicant, or of the coordinator even where the requested funding is below the threshold referred to above.

If requested by the allocated KIC, successful applicants will go through the validation and financial capacity check process of the Onboarding Service of the KICs (i.e. a shared service led by EIT Urban Mobility KIC).

At the proposal submission stage, the coordinator will be asked to confirm that the organisation has carried out a self-check of the financial capacity of the organisation through the financial self-check tool[67] or has been covered by a financial viability check for an EU project for the last closed financial year.

If, after the financial capacity check, a coordinator's financial capacity is considered not satisfactory, further information may be required and further measure(s) may be applied by the allocated KIC:

- an enhanced financial responsibility regime, i.e. joint and several responsibilities for all beneficiaries or joint and several liability of affiliated entities
- the financial capacity of the applicant may be structurally guaranteed by another legal entity/ies;
- prefinancing paid in instalments
- the KIC may propose no prefinancing
- the activities may be subject to additional monitoring and reporting based on an action plan
- the KIC may request that the applicant is replaced or, if needed, reject the entire proposal

By submitting the proposals, the applicants confirm that they have stable and sufficient financial resources to successfully implement the proposals in which they participate.

11. Evaluation, Award and EIT KIC Allocation Procedure

Proposals will follow the standard submission and evaluation procedure (one-stage submission and one-step evaluation). Proposals will first be checked for admissibility and eligibility (see Sections 6 and 7). Eligible proposals will subsequently be assessed against the award criteria set out in Section 11.1. The evaluation will assess the quality, relevance and feasibility of each proposal, including the coherence of its needs assessment, Innovation Vision Action Plan (IVAP), selected Funded Actions, contribution to the Call's Policy Objectives and Specific Objectives, and proposed KPI commitments. Proposals will be assessed for

[67] https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/lfv/lfvSimulation.do

operational capacity within the external evaluation. Financial capacity will be checked only for successful applicants during the grant preparation phase.

The quality assessment will be carried out with the support of at least three independent experts (referred to as the 'expert panel') per application. The independent experts will assess proposals based on the published award criteria in Section 11.1 and will establish scores in accordance with the agreed evaluation methodology. This process will result in a single ranking list covering all proposals submitted under the Call.

The EIT HEI Call Evaluation Committee, representing all participating EIT KICs in the EIT Higher Education Initiative, will oversee the integrity and consistency of the entire evaluation, award and allocation process. Where the ranking resulting from the external, independent evaluation requires further selection decisions, for example in the case of ex aequo proposals, the EIT HEI Call Evaluation Committee may apply the priority factors set out in Section 11.2 to determine the final selection of proposals. These factors may be used to ensure an appropriate overall portfolio of selected projects that reflects the strategic objectives of the Call, while preserving the quality ranking established through the independent evaluation. Once the evaluation and award process is closed, the EIT HEI Call Evaluation Committee will also oversee the allocation of selected projects to participating EIT KICs, taking into account the expertise, thematic relevance and capacity of the KICs and the needs of the selected projects. The allocation procedure will be carried out in accordance with the principles and process set out in Section 11.5.

11.1. Award Criteria

Award criterion	Sub-criterion	Assessment aspects
1. Excellence (maximum 25 points)	Clarity and relevance of the project's objectives	• Demonstrates a clear and coherent response to the consortium's identified institutional needs, informed by the HEInnovate self-assessment and reflected in the Innovation Vision Action Plan (IVAP). • Clearly defines how the project contributes to one or more of the Call's three Policy Objectives and the relevant Specific Objectives and Sub-objectives. • Demonstrates a clear and credible focus on strengthening HEIs' contribution to manufacturing and deep-tech innovation, including the development of relevant STEM talent, institutional capacity and ecosystem connections. • Identifies clear target groups and beneficiaries and explains how the proposed activities will generate value for students, researchers, academic and professional staff, HEIs and relevant external partners. • Presents clear institutional ambitions and expected longer-term benefits for participating HEIs.

	Quality of the proposed coordination and/or support measures, including soundness of methodology	• Presents a robust methodology based on the EIT HEI approach, showing how the proposed intervention will contribute to sustainable institutional change. • Demonstrates a coherent relationship between the HEInnovate findings, the Call's Specific Objectives and Sub-objectives, and the selected Funded Actions. • Demonstrates an appropriate and coherent combination of activities across talent development, institutional capacity and ecosystem integration, according to the consortium's needs and maturity. • Explains how the proposed activities will strengthen connections between education, research, innovation support, industry and wider innovation ecosystems, where relevant to the project's objectives. • Describes appropriate learning, institutional support, partnership and quality assurance approaches to deliver the proposed changes. • Integrates diversity, equity and inclusion, including gender equality, into project activities and governance, promoting inclusive access to innovation and entrepreneurship and diverse participation in STEM, manufacturing and deep-tech innovation ecosystems.
2. Impact (maximum 50 points, split into two sub-criteria each worth 25 points)	Credibility of the pathways to achieve the expected outcomes and impacts	• Demonstrates a clear and credible link between actions, objectives and expected institutional changes. • Demonstrates how the project will contribute to the development of manufacturing and deep-tech talent, stronger institutional innovation capacity and/or better integration of HEIs into innovation ecosystems, according to its chosen focus. • Presents realistic plans to achieve the mandatory KPI targets and demonstrates that these targets are appropriate to the proposed intervention and consortium capacity. • Demonstrates how activities and results will contribute to long-lasting institutional change, rather than only producing short-term outputs. • Demonstrates credible pathways from talent, research and technologies towards validation, commercialisation, industrial application and wider uptake. • Demonstrates how participation in and contribution to the EIT HEI portfolio and Community will strengthen the

		project's impact through peer learning, collaboration, knowledge sharing and exchange of relevant results and good practices.
	Suitability and quality of the measures to maximise expected outcomes and impacts, as set out in the dissemination and exploitation plan	• Presents a coherent strategy for dissemination, communication, exploitation, sustainability and transfer of project results, including how successful approaches, educational practices, institutional models and partnerships will be embedded, sustained, replicated or transferred beyond the project consortium and funding period. • Demonstrates how project results, knowledge and learning will contribute to the wider EIT HEI Community and European innovation ecosystem, supporting collective learning and strengthening the wider portfolio. • Demonstrates how the project will use the EIT HEI Community, portfolio and wider EIT ecosystem to support wider uptake and scaling of relevant results and approaches by other organisations and in other contexts. • Demonstrates appropriate measures to maximise the contribution and impact of project results for manufacturing and deep-tech innovation, institutional capacity and talent development.
3. Quality and efficiency of the implementation (maximum 25 points)	Quality and effectiveness of the work plan, assessment of risks, and appropriateness of the effort assigned to work packages and resources overall	• Presents a coherent and realistic implementation plan with appropriate work packages, activities, milestones, deliverables and resource allocation. • Demonstrates that activities are appropriately sequenced to deliver the project's Specific Objectives, Funded Actions and mandatory KPI commitments. • Provides a clear and credible approach to monitoring progress against the IVAP, objectives and KPIs, including appropriate data collection and quality assurance arrangements. • Identifies relevant implementation risks and provides appropriate mitigation measures. • Demonstrates that the proposed budget and resources are proportionate to the planned activities, consortium capacity and expected impact.
	Capacity and role of each participant, and extent to which the consortium as a	• Demonstrates that the consortium has the complementary expertise, experience, networks and operational capacity required to implement the proposed intervention.

	whole brings together the necessary expertise	• Demonstrates appropriate expertise across the areas relevant to the project's objectives, which may include STEM talent development, innovation and entrepreneurship education, IP, knowledge valorisation and technology transfer, institutional change, industry collaboration, deep-tech and manufacturing, and ecosystem integration. • Clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of consortium partners and demonstrates strong institutional commitment from participating HEIs. • Demonstrates meaningful involvement of relevant industry, research, innovation ecosystem, regional and/or European partners, where appropriate to the proposed activities. • Demonstrates that the consortium has access to the participants, infrastructure, expertise and partnerships required to deliver its proposed KPI commitments. • Where applicable, explains how previous EIT HEI beneficiaries will build on existing experience, scale successful approaches, support less experienced partners and contribute to the wider EIT HEI Community.

Award Criteria: Scoring and Thresholds

Award criteria	Minimum pass score	Maximum pass score
1. Excellence	17	25
2.1. Impact: Credibility and scale of the project's expected outcomes and impacts	17	25
2.2. Impact: Suitability and quality of the measures to maximise expected outcomes and impacts, as set out in the dissemination and exploitation plan	17	25
3. Quality and efficiency of the implementation	17	25

Overall minimum threshold for the proposal	75/100 points
Maximum total score	100/100 points

The following evaluation standards will be used to award scores to an application:

Score	Description
0 - 4	The application fails to address the criterion or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information.
5 - 9	Poor. The criterion is inadequately addressed, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.
10 -16	Fair. The application broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses.
17 - 21	Good. The application addresses the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings are present.
22 - 24	Very good. The application addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present.
25	Excellent. The application successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.

Maximum points: 100 points.
Individual thresholds per criterion: 17/25 points.
Overall minimum threshold: 75/100 points.

Proposals that meet all individual criterion thresholds and the overall threshold will be considered for funding, subject to the available Call budget and the applicable budget ceiling. Proposals that do not meet any of the applicable thresholds will not be considered for funding.

Following the external, independent evaluation, proposals will be ranked according to their final evaluation scores. Where proposals receive the same overall score and further prioritisation is required to establish the final ranking, the ex-aequo procedure set out in Section 11.2 will apply. On the basis of the final ranking, proposals will be selected for funding in descending order until the available Call budget is exhausted, subject to the applicable funding limits.

A reserve list will be established on the basis of the final ranking of eligible proposals that meet the applicable thresholds but cannot be funded within the available Call budget. In the event that a selected proposal is unable to proceed to implementation, withdraws, or its funding is discontinued, the EIT HEI may select a proposal from the reserve list in accordance with the final ranking and subject to the availability of funding.

Successful and unsuccessful applicants will be informed in writing during the week of 22 March 2027.

11.2. Ex-aequo Proposals

Where proposals receive the same overall evaluation score and further prioritisation is required to establish the final ranking, the EIT HEI Call Evaluation Committee will apply the following priority order, starting with the highest priority factor and proceeding sequentially until a distinction can be made:

1. **Excellence:** proposals will first be prioritised according to their scores for the criterion of *Excellence*. Where these scores are equal, priority will be given according to the scores for the criterion of Impact 2.1: Credibility and scale of the project's expected outcomes and impacts.

2. **Portfolio-related factors:** where a distinction cannot be made on the basis of the above scores, the EIT HEI Call Evaluation Committee may consider additional factors relevant to the strategic objectives of the Call, such as:

- gender balance and other diversity considerations in innovation capacity-building activities
- participation of non-academic sector organisations
- geographical diversity
- other relevant factors justified by the objectives and scope of the Call

The factors considered and the rationale for their application will be documented in the Evaluation Report.

3. **Overall portfolio and synergies:** if the above factors do not allow a distinction to be made, the EIT HEI Call Evaluation Committee may consider the overall composition of the proposed project portfolio, including opportunities to create positive synergies and complementarity between selected projects, as well as other factors directly related to the objectives of the Call.

The factors considered and the rationale for their application will be documented in the Evaluation Report prepared by the EIT HEI management team.

11.3. Standstill period

Following the communication of the results of the evaluation, a standstill period of **14 days** shall be applied before signing the Project Grant Agreement with the selected applicants.

11.4. Redress and Complaint Procedure

Upon receipt of the evaluation results, the applicant may wish to lodge a request for redress, if there is a concern that there might have been a shortcoming in the way a proposal was evaluated. The redress procedure is not meant to call into question the judgement made by the independent experts who evaluated the proposals. The redress procedure will only consider procedural shortcomings and factual errors. Requests for redress should be raised within **14 days** of the receipt of the evaluation report and should be sent to compliance@eitrawmaterials.eu.

Requests must:

- Be related to the evaluation process
- Include a clear description of the grounds for the complaint
- Be received within the time limit specified above

An initial reply will be sent to complainants no later than two weeks after the deadline for redress requests. This initial reply will indicate when a reply will be provided. The EIT HEI Call Evaluation Committee will be informed about the redress and a Redress Committee, established by EIT RawMaterials, will be convened to examine the evaluation process for the case under consideration.

If there is clear evidence of a shortcoming that could have affected the funding decision, the Redress Committee may decide that all or part of the proposal should be re-evaluated. Unless there is clear evidence of a shortcoming there will be no follow-up or re-evaluation. The Redress Committee will inform the EIT HEI Call Evaluation Committee of the outcome of any such re-evaluations.

Please note:

- This redress procedure is concerned with the evaluation process.
- The Redress Committee will not call into question the judgment of the individual expert evaluators, whose qualifications have already been assessed and validated.
- A re-evaluation will only be carried out if there is evidence of a shortcoming that affects the quality assessment of a proposal. This means, for example, that a problem relating to one evaluation criterion will not lead to a re-evaluation if a proposal has failed anyway on any other criterion.
- The evaluation score following any re-evaluation will be regarded as definitive.
- The evaluation score may be lower than the original score.
- Only one request (i.e. the first submitted request) for redress per proposal will be considered.

11.5. EIT KIC Allocation Procedure

Once the ranking list has been finalised, the EIT HEI Call Evaluation Committee will oversee the allocation of successful proposals across the participating EIT KICs for project management purposes.

The allocation will use the KIC alignment information provided in each proposal as a basis for matching successful projects with the EIT KIC best placed to support their implementation. Where possible, projects will be matched with a KIC whose thematic expertise, network and innovation ecosystem complement the project's objectives, activities and areas of focus. The allocation will also take into account the overall distribution of projects across participating KICs and their capacity to manage the awarded portfolio, with the aim of achieving a fair and balanced distribution while maintaining meaningful alignment between projects and KIC capabilities. The allocation process is therefore intended to translate the KIC connections identified by applicants into an appropriate project-KIC match, providing each funded project with a clear point of connection to the EIT Community and enabling it to benefit from relevant KIC expertise, networks, partnerships and innovation opportunities.

12. Other terms and conditions

12.1. Clarifications on errors or missing information

In the event of errors (such as obvious clerical mistakes) or missing information in the proposal, applicants may be invited to provide a clarification, correction, or completion of the application. Applicants will have ten (10) calendar days from the date of the official communication to submit the requested information, with full respect for the principles of equal treatment and transparency.
The Call Committee will assess the response. If the applicant fails to provide the requested clarification or submits it after the deadline, the proposal will remain inadmissible and will be rejected. The Lead Applicant will be informed accordingly.

12.2. Acceptance of the Call conditions

The KICs managing the EIT HEI reserve the right to make reasonable amendments and additions to the call conditions. Amendments and additions to the call conditions shall be valid only before the submission deadline, and if made available to all potential applicants at the same time on the call page here: https://eit-hei.eu/funding-support/funding-opportunities/open-calls/call-for-proposals-2026/

The KICs managing the EIT HEI may declare the call unsuccessful in case no applications are received, if the applications do not meet the admissibility, eligibility, exclusion and selection criteria, or if none of the applications reach the thresholds laid down in this call text.

By submitting the application form, the applicant agrees to the present call conditions. Applicants agree that they have no legal entitlement to funding.

12.3. Cancellation of the call

The KICs managing in the EIT HEI reserve the right to cancel the call at any time before the signature of the Project Grant Agreement(s) without the obligation to compensate applicants, in particular where its objectives can no longer be met, provided that the applicants are informed in a transparent manner in writing as follows:

- if the cancellation takes place before that award: on the call page of the EIT HEI website here: https://eit-hei.eu/funding-support/funding-opportunities/open-calls/call-for-proposals-2026/
- if the cancellation takes place following the communication of the results to the applicants, during the standstill period, or any time before the signature of the Project Grant Agreement: in writing directly to the selected applicants.

12.4. Data protection

The EIT Raw Materials Deutschland GmbH managing the EIT HEI ensure that any processing of personal data shall be performed in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016, on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and in accordance with Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation).

As a data subject, you have the right of access, the right to rectification, the right to erasure, the right to restrict processing, the right to data portability, the right to object, and the right not to be subject to a decision based solely on automated processing. If you have a question about personal data processing or want to exercise your data subject rights, you can contact the Data Protection Officer of EIT Raw Materials Deutschland GmbH at kontakt@wiemer-arndt.de.

The collected personal data will be used solely for the evaluation of the applications and the conduct of the call process. The data controller is EIT Raw Materials Deutschland GmbH.

Personal data will be deleted 5 years after the announcement of the results of the call in case of unsuccessful applications. Personal data processing for successful applications must be managed under the data policy for successful applications.

By submitting your application to this call, you consent that the KICs will collect, transfer, process, store, and delete your data in accordance with the aforementioned conditions.

For more information on the processing of your personal data, please consult the privacy statement of EIT Raw Materials Deutschland GmbH at: https://seedbook.eitrawmaterials.eu/CallFileDownloadOpen.aspx?Id=63567

12.5. Confidentiality

The KICs managing the EIT HEI undertake to use any confidential information shared by the applicants solely for the purposes of the evaluation process.

Confidential information shall mean data and/or information (in any form) that is proprietary to, or possessed by, the applicants and not generally known to the public, or that has not yet been revealed whether in tangible or intangible form, that is identified as confidential in writing or when disclosed orally.

Confidential information included in the application form must be expressly labelled by the applicant as such in the form. As regards confidential information expressly labelled as such in the call process, the KICs managing the EIT HEI undertake to (i) not disclose them in any way and any form, without the prior written authorization of the applicant; and (ii) not to use them for purposes other than those strictly necessary for participation in the call.

Confidential information may be shared among the KICs managing the EIT HEI and their subsidiaries (e.g. KIC Co-Location Centres) solely for the purposes of the call process. The KICs managing the EIT HEI undertake to impose this confidentiality obligation on its employees and the employees of its subsidiaries and its collaborators, as well as on independent experts and all subjects who, by virtue of participating in the conduct of the call, including as members of the EIT HEI Call Evaluation Committee, may have access to such confidential data and information.

The applicants agree that data and information regarding the selected projects' implementation (e.g. success stories) not labelled as confidential may be disclosed in connection with the EIT HEI activities.

12.6. Avoidance of conflict of interest

The KICs managing the HEI are committed to ensure the avoidance of conflict of interest (regarding all actors) and comply with the principles of transparency, non-discrimination and sound financial management.

Measures to avoid potential Conflict of Interest or unequal treatment of applicants are ensured including through appropriate conflict of interest declaration and assessment process, established written communication channels and independent and fair complaints/redress procedures.

In case an applicant becomes aware of a potential conflict of interest affecting the conduct of the call process, it shall notify EIT RawMaterials compliance@eitrawmaterials.eu of the conflict of interest without any delay.

12.7. Ethics and values

The proposal must comply with:

- ethical principles (including the highest standards of research integrity) and
- applicable EU, international and national law, including the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and its Supplementary Protocols.

No financial support/EIT funding can be granted, within or outside the EU, for activities that are prohibited in all Member States. No financial support/EIT funding can be granted in a Member State for an activity which is forbidden in that Member State.

12.8. Intellectual property rights

Applicants retain full and exclusive ownership of their prior information and intellectual property rights. By submitting their application, applicants affirm that they hold ownership or have legally secured the right to use all elements of the innovative product or service included in their application.

Applicants agree to indemnify and hold harmless the allocated KIC and/or any assignee or affiliate from any third-party allegations or claims of intellectual property rights infringement by the product or service of applicants. Applicants shall have the right to further develop, use and license their intellectual property rights for creating, making, marketing, and distributing products, services, and technology. Applicants agree to respect the IPR (Intellectual Property Rights) Rules (Article 16) of the General Model Grant Agreement[68] and the respective provisions of the Project Grant Agreement.

12.9. Withdrawal of the funding – Recovery of undue amounts

The allocated KIC may withdraw the funding after its award and recover all payments made in line with the provisions of the Project Grant Agreement, including in the following cases:

- in case the applicant committed substantial errors, irregularities or fraud
- in case the applicant committed serious breach of obligations under the Project Grant Agreement or during its award (including non-compliance with the call conditions, submission of false information, failure to provide required information, etc.)
- it is established that the awarded applicants were not eligible or should have been excluded

12.10. Checks, reviews, audits and investigations

The allocated KIC retains the right to initiate checks, reviews and audit on an applicant that has been awarded funding, in order to verify compliance with the requirements of the call conditions and of the legal and contractual framework referred to above.

The allocated KIC may request any information and data from applicants that have been awarded funding for 5 years after completion for these purposes, as well as in relation to monitoring by the EIT.

In accordance with the Grant Agreement between the EIT and the KICs, the EIT and/or the Commission, the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) and the Court of Auditors may carry out checks, reviews, audits and investigations in relation to the call and the implementation of the projects.

12.11. Applicable law

The present call is governed by the applicable European Union legal framework (i.e. in particular the EIT Regulation[69], the EU Financial Regulation[70], the Horizon Europe Regulation[71]), supplemented, if necessary, by the national law of Belgium.

[68] https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/agr-contr/general-mga_horizon-euratom_en.pdf
[69] Regulation (EU) 2021/819.
[70] Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509.
[71] Regulation (EU) 2021/695.

The applicants agree to observe the obligations outlined in the Partnership Agreement and the provisions of the Horizon Europe Grant Agreement signed between the EIT and the KICs to implement the EIT HEI activities.

Following the signature, the applicants will have to comply with the terms of the Project Grant Agreement between successful applicants and the allocated KIC.

12.12. Settlement of disputes

All disputes arising out of or in connection with the call procedure and the implementation, which cannot be solved amicably, shall be finally settled before the courts of Brussels.

13. Annexes

13.1. Information on Key Dates, Submission and Enquiries

Key Dates	Timeline
Launch of EIT Higher Education Initiative Call for Proposals 2026	20 October 2026
Opening of the application portal	20 October 2026
Deadline for submission	13 January 2027, 17:00 CET
EIT HEI Call for Proposals 2026 – online Info Sessions *Click on the name of the Info Session to go to the relevant event registration page.*	• 4 November 2026, 15:00 – 16:30 CET: Overview of EIT HEI Call for Proposals 2026 • 6 November 2026, 15:00 – 16:30 CET: Introduction to HEInnovate • 11 November 2026, 15:00 – 16:30 CET: MEL Framework and the Impact Domains and Actions • 13 November 2026, 15:00 – 16:30 CET: KPI Expectations • 17 November 2026, 15:00 – 16:30 CET: Application and Budget Planning • 23 November 2026, 10:00 – 12:15 CET: EIT KIC Discovery Day • 3 December 2026, 15:00 – 16:30 CET: Open Q&A session
Evaluation period	14 January – 22 March 2027
Announcement of evaluation results	Week of 22 March 2027
Start date of selected EIT HEI Call for Proposals 2026 projects (Cohort 6)	1 May 2027

Face-to-Face IVAP Workshop for selected projects (participation mandatory)	Q4 2027
Where to apply	Applications must be submitted through the EIT HEI Application Portal, HERE

Information and support

The EIT HEI Team will run a series of Information Sessions, and the registration links are available on the EIT HEI Call 2026 webpage[72].

Also available on the Call webpage are FAQs, the Project Design and Implementation Guide[73], KIC-specific contact points and other supporting Call documents. These support materials are also widely available on the application portal.

For general enquiries, contact: hei@eitrawmaterials.eu

For information on EIT KICs and their strategic documents/KIC briefs, applicants should consult the relevant KIC contact information provided on the Call page and participate in the EIT KIC Discovery Day on 23 November 2027, which forms part of the Information Session series.

13.2. Innovation Vision Action Plan (IVAP) Submission Guidelines

All funded projects must develop an Innovation Vision Action Plan (IVAP), which serves as the project's full proposal. The details submitted in the application portal will constitute the complete project plan. The IVAP has two parts, which must be completed and submitted through the application portal. Details on the information required for each of the two parts can be found in the Project Design and Implementation Guide[74]. Once you have completed both parts, the lead partner must:

1. Download the Declaration of Honour template,
2. Sign it on behalf of the consortium, and
3. Upload it to the portal before final submission.

[72] https://eit-hei.eu/funding-support/funding-opportunities/open-calls/call-for-proposals-2026/
[73] Please see the EIT HEI Call 2026 Project Design and Implementation Guide: https://eit-hei.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/10/EIT-HEI-Call-2026-Project-Design-and-Implementation-Guide.pdf
[74] Please see the EIT HEI Call 2026 Project Design and Implementation Guide: https://eit-hei.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/10/EIT-HEI-Call-2026-Project-Design-and-Implementation-Guide.pdf

13.3. EIT Impact Framework

The EIT HEI Call 2026 uses selected indicators from the EIT Impact Framework to provide quantitative evidence of project-level results and contribution to the wider EIT objectives[75]. The applicable EIT HEI and EIT Core KPI requirements are set out in Section 2.5. Applicants should use the KPI definitions provided there when preparing their proposals. Where required by the Call, applicants should also indicate how relevant EIT HEI KPIs may be used to monitor progress beyond the EIT HEI funding period, up to 2035. Projects may use additional indicators and qualitative evidence to monitor progress, results, outcomes and longer-term institutional change, including through the EIT HEI MEL Framework[54].

[75] https://www.eit.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eit_impact_framework_2022-2027.pdf