

EIT Higher Education Initiative

Info Session:

Overview of the EIT HEI Call for Proposals 2026

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01

Introduction to the EIT Higher Education Initiative

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Aim: Empower higher education to drive innovation

- Brings together organisations from higher education, business and research.
- Strengthens the capacity of HEIs to become active drivers of innovation and entrepreneurship.
- Supports institutional transformation, stronger partnerships and the development of entrepreneurial talent.
- Connects education and research with business and wider innovation ecosystems.

The ambition: to move beyond individual activities and silos to build lasting institutional capacity for innovation.

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KICs involved in the **EIT Higher Education Initiative**

EIT RawMaterials – Connecting matters
Develop raw materials into a major strength for Europe

DGTL
Drive Europe's digital transformation

ClimateKIC
Accelerating the transition to a zero-carbon economy

EIT Food
Accelerating agrifood innovation in Europe

EIT UrbanMobility
Smart, green & integrated transport

EIT Health
Healthier lives for EU Citizens

EIT Culture & Creativity
Unite Europe's creatives

Annual Calls for Proposals

The EIT Higher Education Initiative Calls for Proposals offer an opportunity for **higher education institutions and their chosen strategic partners** to design and collaborate on unique, needs-based innovation action plans, with the goal of **transforming HEIs into innovation and entrepreneurship powerhouses.**



Success so far in numbers



147 Projects

supporting 700+ HEIs and 400+ non-academic organisations, across 60+ countries



150,00+ Trained

students, researchers, and staff were equipped with innovation and entrepreneurship skills and competences



2,400+ Start-ups

and scaleups were supported to launch, scale and sustain.



02

Call for Proposals 2026 - Strategic Overview

The EIT HEI Call 2026: Aim

Turn STEM talent, knowledge and research into innovation and impact

Strengthen the capacity of higher education institutions to drive innovation and entrepreneurship, translate knowledge into practical applications, and contribute to Europe's competitiveness and industrial transformation.

Strategic focus: Deep-tech innovation and its translation into manufacturing and industrial applications.



Policy Objective 1

STEM talent for deep tech and manufacturing innovation and entrepreneurship

Strengthen the innovation, entrepreneurship and IP competences of STEM talent needed for deep-tech and manufacturing innovation.

- Equip students, researchers, academic staff and professional staff with relevant I+E competences.
- Connect learning with real industrial challenges through practical, challenge-based and interdisciplinary experiences.
- Embed innovation and entrepreneurship education more systematically across STEM disciplines.



Policy Objective 2

Strengthen HEIs as institutional drivers of innovation, from lab to market

Empower HEIs to translate scientific excellence into innovation by strengthening their capacity to move knowledge and technologies towards practical application and market entry.

- Improve institutional structures and processes for knowledge valorisation and technology transfer.
- Strengthen KTO/TTO capacity and support for researchers.
- Embed innovation and entrepreneurship within institutional strategies, leadership and governance.



Policy Objective 3

Connect HEIs to regional and European deep-tech and manufacturing innovation ecosystems

Connect HEIs with industry and other innovation actors, strengthening access to the partnerships, expertise and resources needed to advance deep-tech and manufacturing innovation.

- Develop strategic partnerships with industry and innovation actors.
- Improve access to testing facilities, infrastructure, investment and markets.
- Strengthen participation in regional and European innovation networks and value chains.



Supporting the EU's STEM Education Strategic Plan

The EIT HEI contributes to the **Union of Skills** and its **STEM Education Strategic Plan** by delivering on this mandate:

200,000 STEM students and staff to be trained in innovation, entrepreneurship and IP management by 2028

EIT HEI Call 2026 will deliver an **estimated 70,000 of these learners**.

What counts as STEM for this Call?

The Call follows the STEM Education Strategic Plan definition, covering:

ISCED 05 – Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics.

ISCED 06 – Information and Communication Technologies.

ISCED 07 – Engineering, manufacturing and construction.

A needs-based approach to institutional transformation

Each project should follow a clear intervention logic:

1. Assess institutional needs – each participating HEI completes the HEInnovate self-assessment.
2. Define priorities – identify institutional strengths, gaps and opportunities.
3. Develop the IVAP – translate the findings into a shared Innovation Vision Action Plan.
4. Select Funded Actions – design activities that address the identified needs and contribute to the Call's Policy Objectives.
5. Deliver and measure change – demonstrate outputs, results and progress towards sustainable institutional transformation.



HEInnovate → Institutional priorities → IVAP → Funded Actions → Results and impact

Impact Domains and funded Actions

1. Foster institutional engagement and change
2. Strengthening partnerships
3. Contributing to developing innovations and businesses
4. Enhancing the quality of innovation and entrepreneurial education
5. Knowledge sharing

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Call for Proposals 2026 - General Requirements



What is expected from a funded project?

- A clear institutional vision and commitment to long-term change.
- Integration of education, research and business – the EIT Knowledge Triangle.
- A needs-based IVAP linking institutional priorities, Funded Actions, activities and expected results.
- Meaningful engagement of HEI leadership and relevant institutional structures.
- Connection with at least two and up to three EIT KICs.
- Participation in the wider EIT HEI portfolio and Community.
- Integration of diversity, equity and inclusion throughout project design and implementation.

Projects should demonstrate how their results will be embedded and sustained beyond the funding period.



Project Duration & Funding

Project Duration

18 months (1 May 2027 – 31 October 2028)

Maximum Funding

Up to €1,250,000 per project

Funding rate: 100% eligible costs

Available Budget

Est. €40M total

Full Lifecycle

1

Application

Consortia submit proposals aligned with EIT HEI Call 2026 objectives

2

Evaluation and Selection

Evaluation and selection of winning proposals

3

Implementation of funding period

18-month project period to execute innovation capacity building activities

4

Long-term Impact

Projects continue efforts towards long-term vision for institutional change



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Proposal preparation

1

Consortium-building

Build your consortium in line with the consortium composition criteria and project objectives

2

HEInnovate Self-Assessment

Evaluate current innovation capacity of the participating HEI partners

3

IVAP Development

Create detailed action plan

Core of each project:

Proposal = Innovation Vision Action Plan (IVAP)

- Purpose: Outlines consortium's strategy and detailed Action Plan for innovation capacity building
- Structure:

Both parts are submitted via the Application Portal

- Technical information (Part A)
- Narrative content (Part B)



04

Call for Proposals 2026 - Specific Requirements

Eligible Participating Organisations

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

Recognized degree-granting institutions at tertiary level, accredited by national authorities.

Registration in the EU's Participant Register and PIC number required.

Vocational Education and Training (VET) providers

Businesses, Industry, Investors

Private enterprises of all sizes, from small to large corporations.

Research Organisations

TTOs and KTOs

Public bodies at local, regional or national level

Intermediary organisations, networks and associations

Social enterprises and NGOs



Consortium Composition Criteria

Your consortium must:

- Have at least 5 partner organisations, all based in Horizon Europe-eligible countries
- Include at least 3 HEIs from 3 different Horizon Europe eligible countries
    - One of them must be from an EU Member State
- Include at least 2 business / industry partners (including industry networks and associations)

There is **no maximum number of organisations** within an EIT HEI project consortium.

IMPORTANT: An organisation must not participate in more than one Proposal – this leads to automatic ineligibility for the entire proposal and consortium.



Consortium Roles and Responsibilities

Coordinator

The applicant or coordinator, which must be a Higher Education Institution (HEI), submits the EIT HEI application on behalf of all partners and is fully responsible for ensuring the project's proper implementation.

Beneficiaries

Full partners in the EIT HEI actively contribute to project objectives, lead work packages or activities, receive funding, and are advised to sign a mandate granting the coordinating organization authority to act as the main beneficiary on their behalf during project implementation.

Associated Partners

Organisations that contribute to project tasks, activities, or support dissemination and sustainability without receiving EIT funding must complete and sign a letter of commitment (using the provided template) to be uploaded in the application portal.

Building on previous EIT HEI experience

Previous participation: what applicants need to know

- Demonstrate clear additionality
- Build on previous results and lessons, no continuation or replication
- **Cohort 5 funded beneficiaries are not eligible to apply as funded beneficiaries under this Call.**
- Cohort 5 Associated Partners (non-funded) remain eligible to apply.

Innovation and Entrepreneurship Pioneers

Previous EIT HEI participants are encouraged to contribute through peer learning, knowledge sharing and mentorship, helping to scale successful approaches and support less experienced partners.



Project implementation and Community participation

Projects are part of a wider EIT HEI portfolio and network.

Funded projects are expected to contribute to the wider EIT HEI Community through:

- Appointing a Community Officer.
- Developing a Community Engagement Plan by Month 3.
- Participating in relevant portfolio-level activities throughout the project.
- Contributing to at least two of the three Community contribution areas.
- Sharing at least two success stories and two good practices during the funding period.

Projects must also integrate diversity, equity and inclusion into their design, activities and governance, and submit a DEI Value Statement and Action Plan by Month 3.



KPI Criteria – At a Glance

KPI Code KPI	Basic Description	Minimum Target
EIT HE03.1	Number of start-ups and scale-ups supported by the project	Combined 4.
EIT HE04.1	Number of start-ups and scale-ups created by the project	
EIT HE08.1	Number of successful participants who complete training programmes *For this KPI, all participants must come from STEM fields, as per the official list of eligible STEM disciplines linked in the Call text.*	2,200 *Students + academic staff + non-academic staff*
EIT HE19.1	Number of new and/or improved structures and mechanisms established in or mobilized by HEIs participating in the EIT HEI project with an objective to support innovation and / or entrepreneurship	4 *One of these must enhance diversity and inclusion, such as a new structure supporting female entrepreneurs*
EIT HE20.1	Number of new partnerships established as a result of the EIT HEI project.	4

Core KPI Criteria – At a Glance
Choose minimum 1 of 3

Core KPI Code KPI	Basic Description	Minimum Target
EIT HE02.4	Number of innovations launched on the market by the project	#1
EIT HE04.4	Number of start-ups and scale-ups created by the project, with a financial transaction of minimum 10,000 EUR	#1
EIT HE06.1	Total EUR amount of private and public capital attracted by startups/scale-ups supported by the project	Minimum 10,000 EUR; € target set by the project

Evaluation of Proposals

See Sub-Criteria per Topic in the Call text

1

Excellence

Evaluators assess the clarity and relevance of project objectives, as well as the quality of proposed coordination and support measures. The soundness of the methodology is a key factor in this criterion.

2

Impact

This criterion focuses on the credibility of pathways to achieve expected outcomes and impacts. Evaluators consider the likely scale and significance of the project's contributions, along with the quality of dissemination and exploitation plans.
Impact carries the highest weighting in the evaluation, accounting for 50% of the total score.

3

Quality and Efficiency of Implementation

The work plan's quality, risk assessment, and resource allocation are evaluated. The capacity and roles of participants, as well as the consortium's overall expertise, are crucial factors in this criterion.

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Call for Proposals 2026 - Application and Support

Application Resources and Support

All available on the Call 2026 webpage:

- Full Call text
- Project Design and Implementation Guide
- Matchmaking platform
- 7 Info Sessions
- Interactive Guide for application readiness
- FAQs document (dynamic)
- KIC Synergies documents
- Application Portal *(Seedbook)*
- EIT HEI newsletter
- HEI inbox

Questions?

Contact: hei@eitrawmaterials.eu

Website: eit-hei.eu



Key dates and Application Timeline

Call Stage	Date
Call opening	20 October 2026
Submission deadline	13 January 2027, 17:00 CET
Evaluation period	14 January – 19 March 2027
Evaluation results	Week of 22 March 2027
Project Agreement preparation	April 2027
Project start	1 May 2027
Project end	31 October 2028

Call 2026 Info Sessions

UPCOMING EVENTS | Online Event

Overview of EIT HEI Call for Proposals 2026 (Call 2026 Info...

4 November 2026, 15:00-16:30 CET

Register

UPCOMING EVENTS | Online Event

Introduction to HEInnovate (Call 2026 Info Sessions)

6 November 2026, 15:00-16:30 CET

Register

UPCOMING EVENTS | Online Event

Application and Budget Planning (Call 2026 Info Sessions)

17 November 2026, 15:00-16:30 CET

Register

UPCOMING EVENTS | Online Event

EIT KIC Discvery Day (Call 2026 Info Sessions)

23 November 2026, 10:00-12:15 CET

Register

UPCOMING EVENTS | Online Event

MEL Framework and the Impact Domains and Actions (Call 2026 In...

11 November 2026, 15:00-16:30 CET

Register

UPCOMING EVENTS | Online Event

KPI Expectations (Call 2026 Info Sessions)

13 November 2026, 15:00-16:30 CET

Register

UPCOMING EVENTS | Online Event

Open Q&A (Call 2026 Info Sessions)

3 December 2026, 15:00-16:30 CET

Register

Register on the Call 2026 page NOW!

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Voices from across the Knowledge Triangle

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HEI

Joao Cortez
Director, Research and Innovation Office
Catholic University of Portugal

Industry / Innovation

Nicole Monti
Head of Startup & Spin-off Unit,
ALMACUBE

Marjan Nikolovski
Director, The New Way

Investor Network

Rita Anson
Board Member, EBAN
Gender initiative Chair, EBAN Executive Committee

HEI

Joao Cortez

Catholic University of Portugal

Director & Innovation Lead

DIP4AGRI – Cohort 3 & ELEVATE - Cohort 4



Industry / Innovation

Nicole Monti

ALMACUBE

Head of Startup & Spin-off Unit

TECH2X – Cohort 4 & S3 Factory – Cohort 5



Industry / Innovation

Marjan Nikolovski

The new Way

Director & Innovation Lead

TECHSIGHT – Cohort 4



Investor Network

Rita Anson

European Business Angels Network

Board Member, Gender initiative Chair

RiEcoLab – Cohort 1 & EUCLID – Cohort 5



Thank you for your participation!

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