



EIT synergies with Horizon Europe and other EU programmes 2021-2027

This paper is addressed to the European Commission, summarises the EIT's reflections on the Commission Proposal for Horizon Europe and puts forward suggestions by the EIT's Governing Board to **ensure that synergies are maximised at EU level between the main instruments of the future European research and innovation programme, as well between the EIT Community and other EU programmes and initiatives**. The synergies between the EIT and EIC are not included in this paper as they are subject to a separate one.

The EIT is by now a well-established instrument to create, nurture and develop innovation ecosystems. As Europe's **largest innovation network** with more than 1 000 partners in 40 hubs boosting innovation across Europe. EIT will continue to make innovation happen, by bringing together the key ingredients - education, research and business across Europe in order to address societal challenges. **So far, the EIT has created more than 6 100 jobs, over 600 new products and services, have nurtured more than 1250 start-ups and scale-ups**. The latter attracted over **EUR 890 million of external investment**. More than 1200 talented EIT Alumni have also graduate from the EIT's entrepreneurial programmes at master and doctoral level. In the last 3 years almost 40 students and entrepreneurs trained by the EIT have featured on the Forbes 30 under 30 lists of Europe's most promising young innovators.

EIT synergies within Horizon Europe

Given the 8 societal challenges covered by the EIT and its coverage of the whole innovation chain from education, business creation and acceleration to research driven innovation that is brought to the market, the **EIT has been designed in a cross-cutting nature and with a strong mandate to create synergies**. Below the key synergy potentials are analysed that the EIT could deliver upon. This will require a structured collaboration with other programmes in Horizon Europe, already from the design phase, so that synergies materialise, duplication is avoided and EU funds are efficiently used.

Horizon Europe acknowledges that *"while the European Institute of Innovation and Technology's focus on innovation ecosystems makes it naturally fit within the Open Innovation pillar of Horizon Europe it should also support the other pillars"*. In particular, the **EIT has a unique role and contribution to make through its innovation communities to Pillar II Global Challenges**. The Mission of the EIT is to provide **solutions to the most pressing global challenges facing society**. The EIT supports products, services and jobs in the areas of climate, digitalisation, energy, health, raw materials and food. Soon these will be joined by urban mobility and manufacturing. The EIT is already today delivering on UN Sustainable Development Goals and should therefore, be closely interlinked across all clusters.

Horizon Europe – pillar I Open Science and pillar II Global challenges as well as spreading excellence - synergies

The EIT is well placed to create mutual complementarity with **Pillar I Open Science**. By way of a concrete example of such complementarity, **the EIT could build on ERC results relevant for specific societal**

challenges and scale them towards the market (e.g. by supporting proof of concept grant holders and include them in their ecosystem). The EIT stands ready to learn from the ERC on how it can enhance its support for excellent researchers. In addition, the EIT has a wealth of valuable resources in the form of innovative practices and learnings that can also share with the ERC in aid of its goal to facilitate commercial and social innovation potential of funded research.

Equally, the EIT could play a leading role in the **training of researchers** to make them more entrepreneurial or to enhance their digital skills, for example under the **Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions**. The EIT's innovation communities have the necessary tools and partners to provide such training in an effective way.

Moreover, the EIT's Innovation Communities are uniquely placed to contribute to **future missions and the clusters** under the **Pillar II Global Challenges**. To achieve this, the right mechanisms to allow for their participation will need to be designed. All 8 current KICs fall under the 5 proposed clusters and are likely to be relevant for future missions.

Under pillar III synergies with the EIC and innovation ecosystem programme are feasible and elaborated in a separate paper.

With regards to **Sharing Excellence**, synergy opportunities could be explored between the Teaming, Twinning and COST actions and the EIT's pan-European network of leading innovation actors as well its activities under the EIT Regional Innovation Scheme. The latter seems particularly relevant and interesting since both Sharing Excellence and EIT RIS have (almost) the same target group of countries and partly the same target group of innovation actors within these countries.

Regional policy, Smart Specialisation and European Structural funds synergies

The EIT is very well placed to **develop strong synergies with the EU's regional policy and cohesion instruments**. There are strong linkages between the **smart specialisation (RIS3)** approach and the EIT's innovation model, since both of them aim in **building Europe-wide value chains**, work with **research, innovation and education actors** at national/ regional level and aim in **maximising knowledge flows and spread the benefits of innovation** across Europe. Nevertheless, there are several issues and challenges to be addressed for the next phase of the smart specialisation approach ('2.0'), for example related to reinforcing diffusion and exploitation of existing knowledge and technology, skills, as well to strengthening cooperation and internationalization. EIT's pan-European ecosystem has a very unique offer in this context, since it can contribute with its **expertise** and **know-how** in the **design and implementation of RIS3**, thereby help addressing these key challenges. The EIT's network of over 40 Innovation Hubs as well as EIT's activities under the Regional Innovation Scheme can play an important role as catalysts for the local innovation ecosystems. A few examples are presented below:

- **Further develop links of the EIT Community with public innovation support bodies:**
 - ✓ bringing the EIT's model to national authorities and share good practices from the EIT Community (building a culture of co-creation and co-development)
 - ✓ Supporting national authorities in better exploiting ERDF funded R&I infrastructures
 - ✓ Support in better understanding the local potential and access to high-level expertise in cutting-edge areas
- **Entrepreneurial Education and Skills in RIS3:** Using the EIT Label methodology in creating innovative educational programmes (e.g. financial incentives by MAs for local universities, industry and business)

- EIT's pan-European network of 40 Innovation Hubs as a **vehicle in promoting and facilitating regional and interregional collaboration** (reducing fragmentation)
- **Access to Global Value Chains and internationalization** opportunities through KIC partners and available infrastructure both within Europe and beyond

Furthermore, according to the European Commission proposal¹ synergies between the EIT Innovation Communities and national/ regional management authorities, can also be realised at **management level**. In particular, according to the Art.65 (3&5) of the proposal *Managing Authorities may identify Horizon implementing bodies (e.g. for programme co-fund / partnerships / JUs) as **intermediate bodies for implementing cumulative or alternative funding under ERDF rules***. This means that KIC legal entities or Innovation Hubs can take over this role and provide the necessary expertise and transfer of know-how on both the design and implementation of the respective operational programme's activities.

The above-mentioned actions demonstrate a **strong synergy potential** that could direct ESI funding to **investments and projects of higher impact** both at national and European level, while leading to concrete synergy actions between ERDF and Horizon Europe.

EU education programmes synergies, in particular European Universities Networks

The EIT has a key role to play in providing young people with the competencies needed for the future. The **European Universities Network** – an idea first voiced by President Macron during his speech at Sorbonne University in September 2017 – can be realised by scaling our existing EIT Label. The European Universities Network will encourage mobility among students, administrative staff and researchers; cooperation in the development of content; joint research and innovation activities; access to research infrastructures; and societal engagement in research activities. Additionally, several stakeholders ask that the Network should be based on knowledge triangle integration, implement innovative learning methods, disseminate best-practices, and work on interdisciplinary themes or challenges.

Over the past 10 years, the EIT Community has developed a wealth of expertise and experience in several aspects that will feature as core elements of the emerging European Universities Network. The EIT possess considerable experience in:

- EU-wide cooperation between professors, researchers, businesses and students, addressing social challenges and fully integrating the knowledge triangle;
- Breaking down the silos between research, innovation and education and fostering synergies between the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area;
- Utilising innovative pedagogies and digital technologies as part of the EIT-labelled programmes to deliver forward looking knowledge, skills and competences;
- Creating multidisciplinary environments that stimulates co-creation and co-sharing of knowledge and innovation to the benefit of the entire innovation ecosystem;
- The application of a quality assurance process – the EIT Label – in developing and ensuring the quality and excellence of educational programmes;
- Implementing an active learning concept, which emphasises training and practical experiences;

¹ REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and financial rules for those and for the Asylum and Migration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Border Management and Visa Instrument

The EIT's unique approach to education – through Knowledge Triangle Integration – ensures that students not only possess excellent technical skills and a 'European' mind-set when they graduate, but also that they have the necessary skills to start their own ventures and bring new ideas to the market. In the short- to mid-term, we foresee that the EIT Community's education activities can be linked to the implementation of the pilot-phase of the Network. In the long-term, we foresee a more structured approach, which will be defined in the EIT's Strategic Innovation Agenda (SIA) for 2021 to 2027.

Moreover, the EIT is also well placed to develop further synergies with education programmes such as **Erasmus+, HE Innovate or skills for the future/ support to STEM education**, but also with other skill development programmes of the EU,

Overview of major synergy potential for the EIT

In summary, the EIT and its Innovation Communities will explore synergies with following programmes as priority:

Programme/ Instrument	Proposed budget	Topic/ Relevance	Description
Horizon Europe			
EIC	10bil	Entrepreneurship and Innovation	Support of innovative start-ups and companies to scale-up their ideas – strong link to the EIT objectives.
European Innovation Ecosystems	0.5bil	Innovation eco-systems & interregional partnerships	Connecting with regional and national innovation actors and supporting joint cross-border innovation programmes. Complementing the ERDF support for innovation eco-systems and interregional partnerships. Connect with EIT as Europe's largest innovation network with over 1000 partners.
European Research Council	16.6bil	Research	Frontier research projects, link to Proof of Concept scheme beneficiaries as these could receive support from EIT KICs to bring products and services to the market.
Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions	6.8bil	Research, Skills	Fellowships and exchanges for researchers, training on entrepreneurship could be provided by EIT.
Clusters under the Global Challenges & Industrial Competitiveness Pillar	50.5bil	All current and potential future EIT Innovation Communities	R&I activities which individually and together will incentivise interdisciplinary, cross-sectoral, cross-policy, cross-border and international cooperation. Strong synergy potential with KICs, also through their participation in missions.
Sharing Excellence	1.7bil	Research and Innovation	Support activities that contribute to a more knowledge-based and innovative and gender-equal Europe. The EIT has its own outreach programmes, the EIT Regional Innovation Scheme.
Other EU Policies/ Programmes			

Cohesion Policy (ERDF/ESF)	190bil/ 88bil	R&I, Entrepreneurship, Skills	ERDF: development and strengthening of regional and local R&I eco-systems and industrial transformation, bridge between RIS3 and excellence ESF: mainstream and scale up innovative curricula, human capital development in R&I Linkages to the EIT's Regional Innovation Scheme and network of EIT innovation hubs in the regions.
InvestEU	15.2bil	Entrepreneurship	Strategic Investments for R&D, potential tool to attract funding to innovative ventures nurtured by EIT Innovation Communities and their impact funds.
Digital Europe Programme	9.2bil	Digital Transformation, Skills	Investments in high-performance computing and data, AI, cybersecurity and advanced digital skills, high relevance for EIT Digital and other EIT Innovation Communities.
European Defence Fund	13bil	Research and Innovation	Collaborative projects addressing emerging and future defence & security threats, bridging technological gaps. Could support new EIT Innovation Communities in the area of Security & Resilience
Single Market Programme	0.96bil	Entrepreneurship	Support services for SMEs, EEN, NCPs etc
LIFE	5.4bil	Climate, clean energy, Circular economy	Developing and implementing innovative ways to respond to environment and climate challenges
Erasmus+	30bil	Education, skills, mobility	Mobility of young students, support to European University Networks.
European University Network Pilot		Education, Research and Innovation	Creation of European universities' network to reinforce and structure cooperation among higher education institutions Offer to well-established networks a European statute to allow cross-border financing from the EU budget and long-term sustainability
Creative Europe	1.8bil	Education, Innovation	Sustain open, inclusive and creative societies and to strengthen the competitiveness of the cultural and creative sectors. Potential future EIT theme of Cultural and Creative Industries.
European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (CAP)	78bil *EAFRD total	Research and Innovation, Food, Agriculture	European Innovation Partnership "agricultural productivity and sustainability" - CAP makes the best use of R&I results
EU Space Programme	16bil *Space programme total	Education, Innovation	Foster an innovative European space sector that can compete globally. EIT KICs already work with the Copernicus programme. Potential future EIT theme.
Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA)	14.5bil	Pre-accession support to candidate countries	Support candidate countries and potential candidates in adopting and implementing the political, institutional, legal, administrative, social and economic reforms. Under IPA the countries can participate in the EIT activities.
Connecting Europe Facility (CEF)	42.3bil	Transport, energy, digital	Support infrastructure projects connecting the EU and its regions
Migration	10bil	Inclusion and Integration	Contribution to the efficient management of migration flows. Potential future EIT theme.