



## EIT'S HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAMME EXTENDED TO 2027 AFTER SUCCESS OF PILOT PHASE

14 December, 2023 - Budapest, Hungary – In a landmark decision, the Governing Board of the European Institute for Innovation and Technology (EIT) has announced the continuation of the 'EIT Higher Education Institutions (HEI) Initiative'. Due to the remarkable achievement of the programme's pilot phase, including the training of 40 000 students and staff and providing support to over 1000 start-ups and scale-ups, the EIT HEI Initiative will now be extended until 2027. The EIT HEI Initiative supports systemic transformations within Universities to steer their research and innovation strategies beyond the classroom to address some of the biggest global challenges.

Universities and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are invaluable to Europe's innovation ecosystem. However, difficulties lie in properly connecting universities to regional non-academic partners to foster innovation; and transferring business and entrepreneurship teaching beyond traditional business faculties. As Europe's largest and most experienced innovation ecosystem, the EIT created a dedicated programme: the EIT HEI Initiative to unlock the full innovation and entrepreneurship potential of higher education institutions. During the programme's pilot phase, 359 HEIs and 179 non-academic were supported with EUR 69 million. Across 65 projects, more than 40 000 students, academic staff, and non-academic staff received training in innovation and entrepreneurship and over 1 000 start-ups and scale-ups received support.

The EIT HEI Initiative was centred around creating institutional change in universities to increase their innovation potential. Supported projects were successful in creating new start-up support infrastructures on campuses, including offices that mandated improved technology transfer, new guidelines for research, commercialisation and intellectual property right strategies, and new curricula for students and staff.

**Iliana Ivanova, Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education, and Youth said:** *"To succeed in the green and digital transitions and build a better future, Europe needs to nurture its talent. This is why this EIT initiative is important: it helps European universities grow their innovation potential and build the capacity to teach innovation and entrepreneurship. After the successful pilot phase, training over 40 000 students and staff, I am eager to see what this initiative will achieve with a broader reach and more partners."*

The EIT HEI Initiative and its network of over 500 organisations, was also instrumental in providing support to Ukraine and its partners during the past two years. Thanks to the quick mobilisation of the EIT Community, close to EUR 4 million was channeled support 35 Ukrainian HEIs and 6 non-academic organisations, connecting them to new partners in Europe and expanding their expertise and knowledge on entrepreneurship.

**Nektarios Tavernarakis, Chair of the EIT Governing Board, added:** *'In just a few years, the EIT HEI network has shown remarkable results, proving that universities continue to thrive as innovation catalysts. The EIT Community is ready to welcome even more academic and non-academic organisations into our network, working together to support the next generation of European entrepreneurs.'*

One of the initiative's standout pilot projects, Inno-EU+, has had a transformative impact on the HEIs involved:

*"We are happy to say that our EIT HEI Initiative project has led to true institutional change... We provided training and mentoring to over 2 200 individuals, comprising 1 900 students and 330*



*academic and non-academic staff. We also mentored 18 start-ups, fostering their growth and development. In terms of events, we organised three International Demo Days, where the top team from each HEI had the opportunity to pitch their innovative ideas. We also hosted one Entrepreneurship Inspirational Week, bringing together cross-cultural and multi-disciplinary teams to generate new product concepts. We conducted an Entrepreneurship Summer School, providing further education and hands-on experience. As a result of our efforts, we established 11 new partnerships within our ecosystems. These partnerships not only supported our local activities but also facilitated cross-campus collaboration and ensured the sustainability of our initiatives beyond the EIT HEI Initiative funding.” said Stelios Yiatros, Project Coordinator of Inno-EU+*

Other successful projects spotlights include [RiEcoLab](#) (lead partner University of Łódź) that is reinventing how research and development is conducted, ensuring quick commercialisation (spin-offs) and engagement of regional stakeholders. Another example is [Inno4YUFE](#) (lead partner Maastricht University) who have been instrumental in introducing new curriculum design, for instance, including internships in universities’ entrepreneurial ecosystems.

The decision to extend the EIT HEI Initiative signifies the EIT’s a commitment to further empowering European HEIs. In its post-pilot phase, the initiative will deepen synergies with EIT educational activities, consolidating the gains made during the pilot but also incorporate new HEIs into the existing network, fostering a collaborative environment that transcends geographical boundaries.

[Visit the EIT HEI Initiative website](#) to learn more about the initiatives and explore all 65 projects.

## EIT - MAKING INNOVATION HAPPEN!

### WHAT IS THE EUROPEAN INSTITUTE OF INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY (EIT)?

The EIT strengthens Europe’s ability to innovate by powering solutions to pressing global challenges and by nurturing entrepreneurial talent to create sustainable growth and skilled jobs in Europe. The EIT is an EU body and an integral part of Horizon Europe, the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation.

The Institute supports dynamic pan-European partnerships, EIT Knowledge and Innovation Communities, among leading companies, research labs and universities. Together with their leading partners, the EIT Community offers a wide range of innovation and entrepreneurship activities across Europe: entrepreneurial education courses, business creation and acceleration services and innovation driven research projects.

### EIT POWERS INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS TO GLOBAL CHALLENGES

The EIT’s nine Knowledge and Innovation Communities work to accelerate the transition to a zero-carbon economy ([EIT Climate-KIC](#)); bring innovation to the European cultural and creative sectors and industries ([EIT Culture & Creativity](#)); drive Europe’s digital transformation ([EIT Digital](#)); lead the global revolution in food innovation and production ([EIT Food](#)); give EU citizens greater opportunities to lead a healthy life ([EIT Health](#)); achieve a sustainable energy future for Europe ([EIT InnoEnergy](#)); strengthen the competitiveness of Europe’s manufacturing industry ([EIT Manufacturing](#)); develop raw materials into a major strength for Europe ([EIT RawMaterials](#)); and solve the mobility challenges of our cities ([EIT Urban Mobility](#)).



### EIT FACTS & FIGURES

- **Europe's largest innovation network:** 2 400+ partners from top business, research and education organisations across Europe in 50+ innovation hubs across Europe
- **Making innovation happen:** powered more than 7 800 start-ups and scale-ups, created more than 2 110 new products and services that have gone to raise more than EUR 7.3 billion in external capital. More than 5 700 students have graduated from EIT labelled master and doctoral programmes and over 10 000 have participated in EIT Community entrepreneurial trainings.

