Meet Inspiring EIT Community
Women Leaders and Entrepreneurs

Marisa Hernández
EIT InnoEnergy alumna, and founder
of Ingelia

Tell us a bit about yourself and your connection to the EIT Community.
I am an industrial engineer and MBA, I have built my career in the innovation sector, working in companies that aim to bring innovative projects to the market. I got in touch with the EIT and EIT InnoEnergy two years ago in Barcelona and we issued an application for EIT InnoEnergy to support our project. Now we are working closely with InnoEnergy Iberia in support of the commercialisation of our new plants.

Tell us about Ingelia and how you came up with the idea.
Hydrothermal carbonation (HTC) was discovered in 1913 by Friedrich Bergius. In 2016, the Max Planck Institute restarted investigations into this tech by holding a workshop which we were selected to participate in. We developed HTC technology at an industrial scale and in 2010, built one of the first industrial plants worldwide. Our technology allows you to turn organic waste into biomaterials, contributing to a circular economy. We have been granted 14 international patents for our tech and products. To date we have working projects in Spain, Italy, Belgium, and Scandinavia.

What’s next for you and your company?
We plan to maintain our focus on research and are now working on new applications for HTC products in the bioindustry. From a market perspective, we are facing a very intensive growth period as we instal new plants in different countries across Europe and abroad.

What is the most important advice you would give to young women following in your footsteps?
When working in innovation, an entrepreneur faces two important and difficult phases: the technology depth valley and the commercial depth valley. For the former I would recommend them to strongly believe in themselves, their product, and the input they get from colleagues. For the latter, it is very important to maintain focus, select your client and understand their worries and interests to ensure you provide in a timely and economic manner.

Have you had to overcome many extra obstacles as a female entrepreneur?
I have been used to working with men since my time studying engineering at University, where 95% of my class were male. I have always felt comfortable and worked together to create value. The only difficult period to overcome is that of time management when you decide to have a family. It requires a lot of time and effort to have children while also working at a high level.

Who are three inspirational women in your field and why?
It’s certainly difficult to answer, but I admire: Marie Curie for her career and the two Nobel Prizes she won in Physics and Chemistry. Also Sophie Mutter, for her playing of the violin and her excellence in music, and Eija Alakangas from VTT, for her determination and great contributions to the biomass sector.