



European Institute of
Innovation & Technology

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EIT GENDER EQUALITY PLAN 2023 IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

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1. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Gender equality is a core value of the European Union (EU) and is enshrined in its legal and political framework. The EU's commitment to promoting gender equality in innovation and technology is part of the European Commission (EC) Gender Equality Strategy for 2020-2025, which sets out the Union's broader commitment to equality across all EU policies. In addition, the EU has a well-established regulatory framework on gender equality, including binding directives, which apply widely across the labour market including the innovation and technology sector.

Under the Horizon Europe Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, the commitment to gender equality in research and innovation is reaffirmed and significantly strengthened. The legal base sets gender equality as a crosscutting priority and introduces strengthened provisions. The activities developed under Horizon Europe should ensure the effective promotion of equal opportunities for all and the implementation of gender mainstreaming, including the integration of the gender dimension in R&I content. The 3 main gender equality dimensions outlined in the Horizon Europe's provisions are:

- a) Gender Equality Plan: eligibility criterion for funding (applies to public bodies, research organisations and higher education institutions established in the EU Member State or Associated Country)
- b) Integration of Gender Dimension in the R&I content: Mandatory by default, unless specified otherwise in topic description. Award Criterion under Excellence (methodology)
- c) Gender balance in Research Teams: Ranking Criterion for ex aequo proposals

The Regulation establishing Horizon Europe specifically mentions for the EIT the need to ensure gender mainstreaming in the implementation of the programme activities of the EIT.

It is worth highlighting, that gender equality, including gender diversity in teams, and in decision making positions, is recognised by the EIT not only as a core value and principle of the European Union, but also as a key element to enhance innovation capacity¹, and to increase returns on investment.² Gender equality contributes to better decision-making and corporate governance. It supports attracting and retaining the best talent. Investing in gender equality benefits innovation and technology by improving its quality and relevance. Furthermore, a positive correlation between the innovation capacity of a country and the gender equality index in that country has been observed.

¹ See among others [Julia Schneider and Verena Eckl Study](#) [Julia Schneider and Verena Eckl Study](#)

² See among others: [S&P Global Analysis](#), [McKinsey](#), [EIT Digital](#), [European Women in VC 2023 Report](#)



2. THE EIT GENDER EQUALITY PLAN 2022-2024 OBJECTIVES, KEY ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS

Drawing upon the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, the gender equality requirements in Horizon Europe, and the EIT Strategic Innovation Agenda 2021-2027, the [EIT Gender Equality Plan \(GEP\)](#), adopted in December 2022, sets out a roadmap to implement the [EIT Gender Equality Policy for 2022-2024](#).

The EIT Gender Equality Policy and Action Plan aim to:

1. Strengthen the lead role of the EIT in the innovation landscape in promoting gender equality, women entrepreneurship, and leadership across Europe.
2. Ensure gender equality at the EIT, including gender balance representation in EIT Staff and Management.

To achieve this, the EIT GEP 2022-2024 outlines specific activities, KPIs, targets, and a set of organisational arrangements for implementation, for each of the overarching objectives.

2.1. STRENGTHENING THE LEAD ROLE OF THE EIT IN THE INNOVATION LANDSCAPE IN PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY, WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP, AND LEADERSHIP ACROSS EUROPE



Throughout 2023, the EIT continued its contribution to the New European Innovation Agenda by offering targeted support to women-led ventures and entrepreneurs. This included supporting women leading deep-tech innovations and connecting the European Innovation Council's Women Leadership Programme to the EIT network.

During 2023, the EIT Community successfully continued and expended a series of projects dedicated to gender equality. Some examples of these include: [Girls Go Circular \(GGC\)](#), which focuses on Action 13 "Women's participation in STEM" of the European Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027 and develops entrepreneurial skills among schoolgirls aged 14-18; [Empowering Women in Agriculture \(EWA\)](#) - training, mentoring, business coaching and networking programme for women entrepreneurs in the agrifood sector from countries with modest to moderate innovation rates with the aim to close gender gaps in agrifood sector; and [SUPERNOVAS](#), aiming to bring more women into the entrepreneurial ecosystem and empower women entrepreneurs, through, among others, networking, training and business coaching.

Acknowledging the importance of gender balance in decision making positions, in 2023 the EIT has maintained



the gender equality KPI, linked to finance allocation, for the EIT KICs governance and management.

The EIT work on gender equality, with a special focus on the [EIT Women Leadership Award](#) which had its 5th edition in 2023 (Award ceremony in March 2024) – was recognised by the European Union Agencies Network (EUAN) and received the EUAN Diversity & Inclusion Award (1st prize). This year the EIT joined forces with the European Innovation Council, creating joint European Prize for Women Innovators – with EIT Women Leadership Award becoming one of the three Award categories – to ensure an even higher impact and recognition for women leaders, innovators, and entrepreneurs across Europe.

2.1.1. FROM PROJECTS-BASED APPROACH TO GENDER MAINSTREAMING

Recognising the successes of the implemented women projects/initiatives, in line with the EIT Gender Equality Plan, in 2023 the EIT has made the next step towards strengthening gender equality and ensuring sustainability of results – moving focus from projects-based approach to gender mainstreaming.

Gender mainstreaming has been embraced internationally as a key strategy towards realising gender equality. It involves the integration of a gender perspective into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all policies, regulatory measures, and spending programmes, with a view to promoting equality between women and men and combating discrimination.

Embracing this approach, through the course of 2023, the EIT took measures to strengthen the incorporation of gender dimension into strategies and planning documents, and in parallel, further enhanced the embodiment of gender aspect into the EIT reporting and monitoring system. The above included, among others, incorporation of gender dimension into the EIT KICs' Strategic Agendas' revisions, introducing new reporting deliverables on gender mainstreaming as part of the EIT KICs Business Plans Amendments, Higher Education Initiative and Cross-KIC Business Plan Amendment³, and incorporation of gender aspect into the EIT KICs' Calls monitoring⁴.

To build awareness and understanding of the EIT gender mainstreaming priorities, and to share the EIT Community experiences and good practices in this area, through the course of 2023, the EIT organised several

³ Reports on strategies and actions/measures implemented to ensure gender balance and incorporation of gender dimension in the EIT KICs innovation, business creation, education programmes, and the Cross-KIC programmes, and results of these actions. First Reports due date: 31/03/2024 – for the 2023 reporting

⁴ The EIT KICs Call Monitoring checklist for Gender Equality includes:

(46) Ensuring gender equality during the performance of the contract: The Call includes the EIT KIC gender diversity value statement and invites the applicants to share their gender equality policy/ measures ensuring gender equality and diversity management during the performance of the contract, including elimination of gender pay gap, work-life balance policies, and gender-balance among the staff performing the contract, with a special focus on managerial levels. (additional selection criterion in case of equal score).

(47) Gender expertise within the team performing the contract: For Calls related to innovation, business creation & acceleration and education activities design and implementation, as well as for HR and Communications services calls where applicable; the Call includes a requirement of a gender expertise within the team performing the contract. (selection criterion).

(48) Incorporating gender dimension into the content of the Call: For innovation, business creation & acceleration and education Calls, as well as HR, Communications services calls where applicable; Gender dimension is incorporated into the aims of the Call. The Applicants are required to incorporate gender dimension into the design and implementation of activities (included intended impact, outputs, outcomes, beneficiaries).



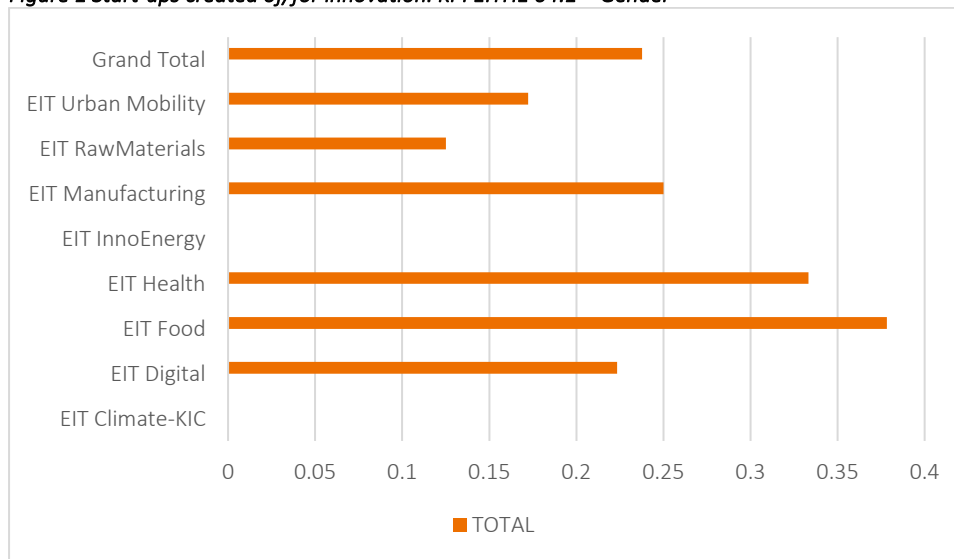
gender sensitizing sessions, targeting the EIT KICs Innovation, Business Creation & Acceleration, and Education Directors⁵, as well as the EIT Staff.⁶ At the same time, a regular cooperation and information exchange platform between the EIT KIC’s Gender Equality Coordinators/ Diversity & Inclusion Leads was established, in a form of bi-monthly meetings of the EIT KICs Gender Equality Working Group, steered by the EIT.

2.1.2. INNOVATION

Integrating gender dimension into research and innovation is key to increase its societal relevance. It is thereby crucial to secure Europe’s leadership in science and technology and support its inclusive growth. Integration of gender dimension in the research and innovation content is mandatory by default for all Horizon Europe projects, unless specified otherwise in topic description.

One of the elements necessary to ensure that gender perspective is incorporated into R&I content in a relevant way, is gender diversity of R&I teams, with a special focus on decision-making positions. The latest reporting figures (2022 Reporting), indicate 24% of women among CEOs/ Owners of EIT KIC-supported start-ups created of/ for innovation (KPI EITHE 04.1 - Gender). The EIT GEP target for this KPI is 25% (by the end of 2024). There are significant differences between the EIT KICs, that are going beyond the historical male-dominated/ more reach in women division.

Figure 1 Start-ups created of/for innovation. KPI EITHE 04.1 – Gender



EIT GEP target 25% women

Status: 23.77% (2021-2022 Reporting)

The level of gender mainstreaming implementation varies between the EIT KICs. During 2023, we have identified several measures/ tools/ good practices implemented by the EIT Community in this area, that can be farther promoted within the innovation landscape.

⁵ Tailored gender mainstreaming info sessions organised on: 23 May, 6 July, 4 October and 10 November 2023.

⁶ Info Session on the EIT Community work and results on gender equality organised for the EIT Staff on 25 September 2023.



As an example, the EIT Urban Mobility, observing gender gaps in this area, introduced several measures to improve the integration of gender dimension and increase gender balance in its innovation projects. We can expect progress for the next reporting period. The measures introduced by the EIT Urban Mobility include incorporating gender and diversity aspect to the midterm review report of Innovation Projects; adding an evaluation question on gender and diversity in Innovation Calls; launching a training course on gender and mobility [Insights into gender differences in urban transport](#) and recommending it to all project leaders in 2023 (enforced in 2024). Several EIT Urban Mobility-funded innovation projects addressing gender equality related issues include: Taxi drivers licensing in Istanbul; School mobility in Cascais, IMPACTS (public transport's perceived security and safety).

2.1.3. BUSINESS CREATION & ACCELERATION

The EIT has a long tradition of projects and initiatives on women entrepreneurship and leadership. The first edition of the [EIT Women Leadership Award](#) took place in 2018. One of the key objectives of the EIT is to empower women entrepreneurs and nurture women leaders.

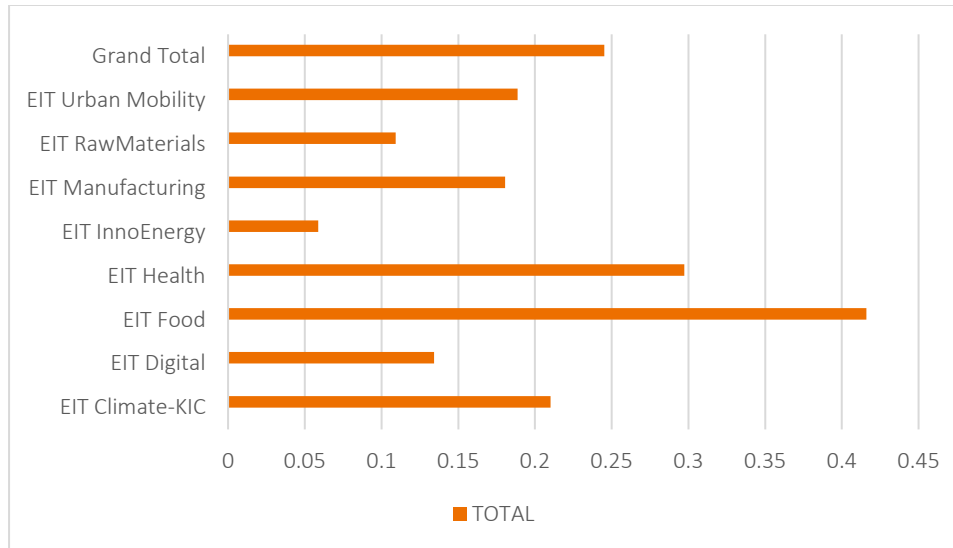
The 2023 analyses and reports coming from the EIT Community confirm a strong business case for gender diversity. The EIT Digital [European Women in VC 2023 Report](#) states that management teams mostly composed of women exceeded the performance of men-only teams by 9.3 percentage points; On average, each 10% increase in the representation of women is associated with a 1.3 percentage point increase in IRR of a VC fund. The higher the proportion of women in European VC senior management teams, the lower the VC fund risk of the returns of the fund portfolios they manage. The Dealroom & [SUPERNOVAS: The Landscape of Women Founded Scaleups Study](#) shows that women-founded tech scale-ups in Europe increased their value 6.5x, growing 1.2x faster than the rest of scale-ups over the past five years.

In the course of 2023, the EIT KICs continued several successful women entrepreneurship and leadership projects, including the [EIT Health Women Entrepreneurship Bootcamp](#) connecting early-stage, women-led or co-led healthcare start-ups to an unparalleled network of mentors to nurture and support rapid growth; [Strada](#) – Empowering Women in Manufacturing, successfully executed in several European countries, focusing on supporting women MSc and Ph.D. students in engineering and women in the manufacturing industry; equipping them with skills to start and grow their own business or develop their professional careers in academia or industry, rising to management and leadership positions; [WE Lead Food](#) - network of women leaders from across the entire food value chain, enabling the participants to draw on knowledge and insights from other parts of the sector they might not currently have access to successfully tackle new challenges, and [Climate-KIC Gender Mainstreaming Programme](#) with Irish Aid, with partners from, among others, Colombia, Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda, Tanzania, which has successfully expended in 2023, with further actions planned for 2024.

The EIT target of 25% women CEOs/ Owners among EIT KICs-supported start-ups and scale-ups has been already achieved at the EIT Community level. There are nevertheless significant differences between the EIT KICs, including between KICs in the traditionally male-dominated sectors, which reflect on the efforts of the EIT KICs to attract and support women talents.



Figure 2 Start-ups and scale-ups supported. KPI EITHE03.1 – Gender



EIT GEP target 25% women. Status: 24.51% (2021-2022 Reporting)

Organising marketing campaigns targeted specifically towards women, actively looking for gender-balanced start-ups during scouting phase, ensuring gender balance within selection panels/ investment committees, having gender diversity within a start-ups team as a ranking criterion, collecting gender-disaggregated data to track and evaluate progress – are among the measures introduced by some of the EIT KICs.

Supernovas

The EIT Community women entrepreneurship and leadership initiative, which deserves a particular attention, is the Cross-KIC SUPERNOVAS programme. The programme was launched in May 2022, and successfully expended throughout the course of 2023. The programme is included within the Strategic Synergies Cross-KIC cluster, which has been created by EIT to support the EU’s mission to build a healthy, sustainable, and inclusive Europe. Since its launching, Supernovas has been promoting and empowering women-led start-ups, enabling women to join the early-stage funding industry and inspiring role models across the sector.

Supernovas is intended to complement and expand the efforts of KICs involved in supporting women entrepreneurship and leadership by proposing a transversal approach to enhance the presence of women in key roles of the entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystem in Europe, not only as nascent entrepreneurs, but also in other key decision-making roles shaping entrepreneurship and innovation for the future. The programme envisages to empower woman-led start-ups, enable women to join the early-stage funding industry and inspire role models across the sector through four main activities, Women2Invest, RocketUp, Women Investors Community and Mentoring for women leaders.

The Women2Invest activity, which is an access and training activity aimed at helping women start their careers in venture investment, is directly contributing to the objectives of the New European Innovation Agenda. For the 2023 edition of the programme, a cohort of 65 women took part in the training course on the fundamentals of investment. The onboarding session took place on the 31 August, including the testimonials



of previous cohort participants. 25% PhD level, rest master and graduate level. In addition, the 2023 cohort had a wide geographical spread 25 European nationalities: Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Kosovo, Lithuania, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, The Netherlands, Türkiye and Ukraine.

RocketUp supports women entrepreneurs to identify and entry new European markets with a solid strategy and local validation of the product and service. Currently, female-led startups in Food, Manufacturing and Urban Mobility are being supported to grow international. The activities under RocketUp include training sessions, discussions with seasoned entrepreneurs, and the support of an internationalization squad, composed by a business mentor and regional expert in the area where the selected start-ups would like to expand to for a first commercial mission. In 2023, a cohort of 10 women-led start-ups were selected for the activity, contributing to the objective of supporting 30 female-led start-ups scaling abroad through training and mentoring until 2025.

The EIT [Women Investors Network](#) (WIN) was officially launched on 4 May 2023. The aim of the EIT WIN is to build a community of women investors to invest in women-led startups, to strengthen sharing and learning and leverage private funding for start-ups through different activities dedicated to training and professional development, organisation of investment forums and networking. Since its launching, three EIT WIN investment forums have been organised on different topics, namely food and health, manufacturing and mobility and sustainability. These actions are contributing to the EIT WIN aim of connecting more than 200 women investors with female-led startups by 2025, towards a more gender balance investors' flow and improving female startups access to finance.

It is also the aim of Supernovas to expand the EIC Women Leadership Programme to the EIT Community. Thanks to their efforts, in 2023 the programme celebrated its third edition co-organised by the EIC and the EIT, in which 15% of the participants were women coming from the EIT Community. Supernovas delivered three of the training sessions during the programme and the third cohort completed with a closing ceremony on 16 June 2023.

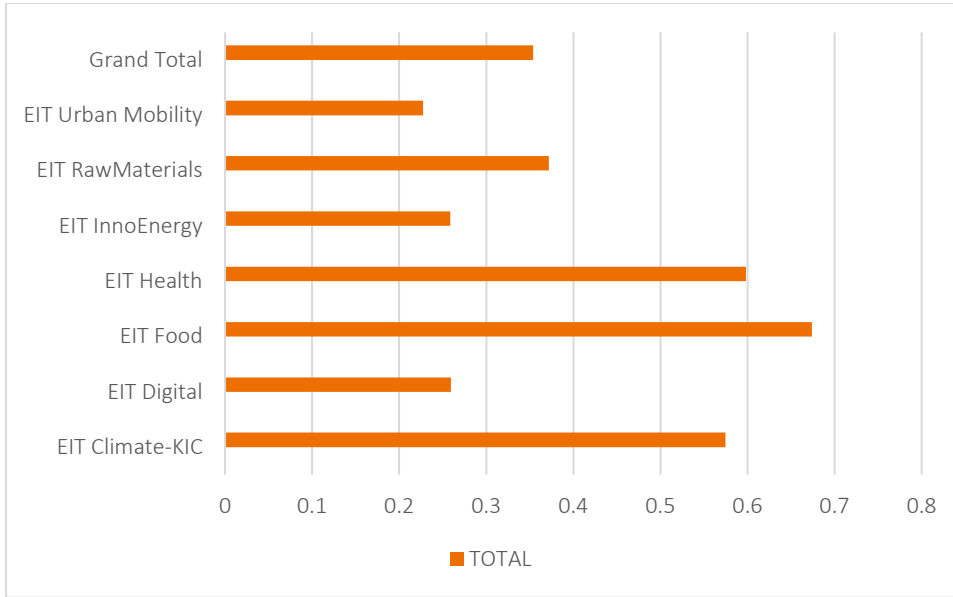
2.1.4. EDUCATION

The EIT Community education activities contribute to the New European Innovation Agenda and goals set in Action 13 of the European Digital Education Plan 2021-2027 – encourage women's participation in STEM.

Educational gender bias, horizontal segregation, with a significant underrepresentation of women in STEM, carry on to the job market, with underrepresentation of women in the workforce and decision making in critical areas, hampering European economy and sustainable growth. In response to this situation, the EIT GEP sets as one of the priority actions *introducing policies and measures to promote gender equality/women in education*, with clear KPIs and targets.

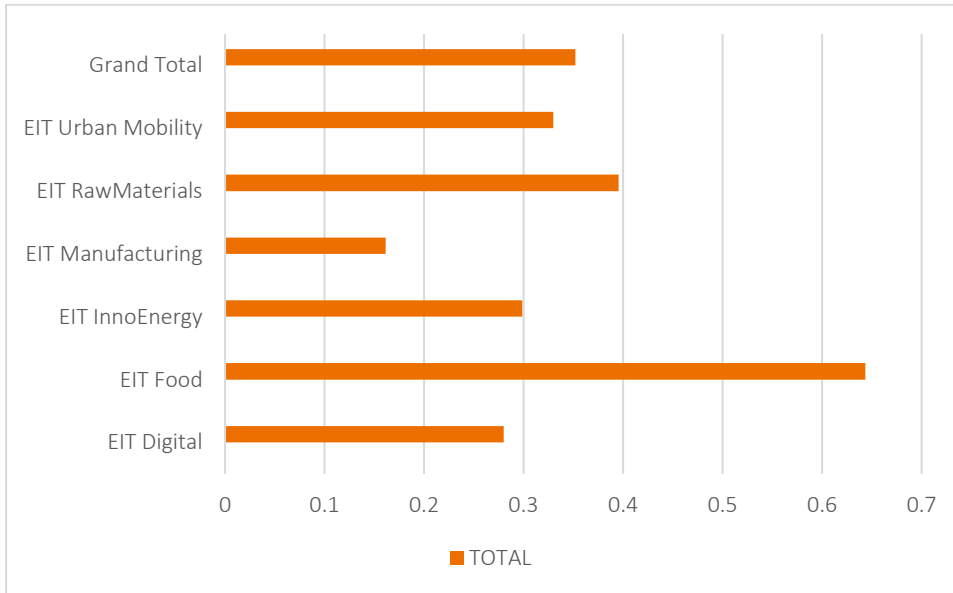


Figure 3 Graduates from the EIT-labelled education programmes. KPI EITHE07.4 – Gender



EIT GEP target 40% (by the end of 2024). Status: 35.40% (2021-2022 Reporting)

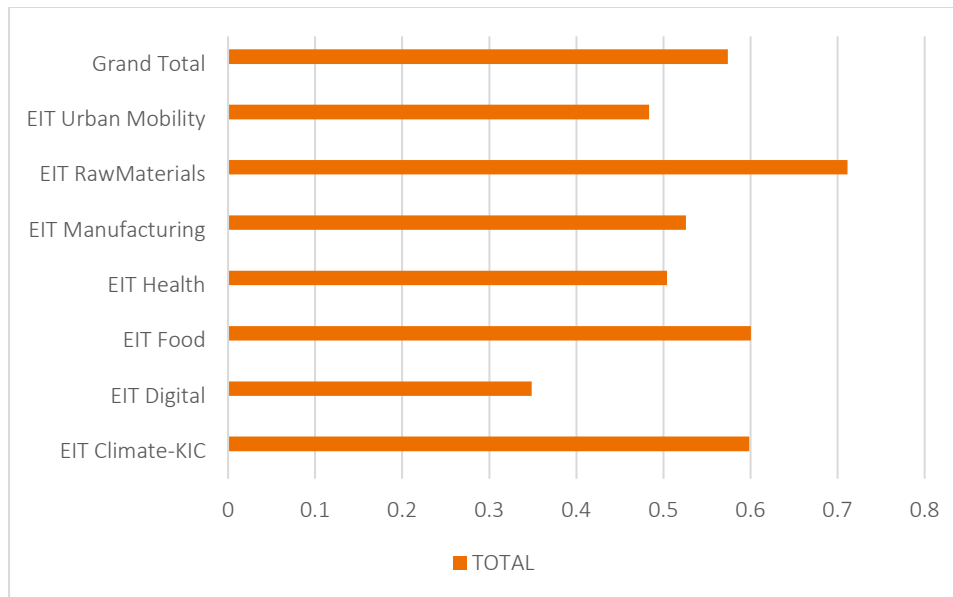
Figure 4 Students of the EIT labelled education programmes. KPI EITHE07.5 – Gender



EIT GEP target 40% (by the end of 2024). Status: 35.19% (2021-2022 Reporting)



Figure 5 Participants in non-labelled education programmes & trainings. KPI EITHE08.1 – Gender



EIT GEP target 50%. Status: 57.40% (2021-2022 Reporting)

Throughout 2023, the EIT KICs continued several projects and measures to increase participation of women in the EIT education programmes, including the EIT Raw Materials EIT-labelled master’s programmes uniformly adopting strategies and measures within their marketing and recruitment efforts to increase gender diversity in STEM; EIT Digital MSL adds specifically targeting women and girls to attract them to EIT Digital educational programmes; EIT InnoEnergy Diversity & Inclusion Scholarship for MSc program; or EIT Urban Mobility financial support for child allowance for placements abroad.

The above measures aim at increasing gender diversity among students. Another equally important aspect is incorporation of gender dimension into the education content. A very good example of a successful implementation of this aspect is the EIT Urban Mobility course [INSIGHTS INTO GENDER DIFFERENCES IN URBAN TRANSPORT](#), exploring gender differences in travel behaviour and their impact on urban transport plans and decision-making process.

Girls Go Circular

Education programme which deserves particular attention is the [EIT Girls Go Circular](#), aiming to address the gender gap in digital and STEM fields by providing educational opportunities and promoting entrepreneurship among young women. While directly contributing to Action 13 of the European Digital Action Plan, the projects is aligned with several additional European policy objectives, including the European Gender Equality Strategy, and the new European Innovation Agenda. The programme is also a part of the EIT Ukraine Support Actions.

The overarching goal of the program is to equip a minimum of 40 000 schoolgirls aged 14-19 with digital and entrepreneurial skills for the circular economy across Europe by 2027. Project's online learning platform '[Circular Learning Space](#)' currently offers 18 learning modules in 16 different languages co-developed by the EIT community. These modules employ a hands-on learning approach, engaging students in online research,



entrepreneurial role-plays, and challenge-based exercises. The platform is open to everyone, allowing users to sign up for the courses at any time. Additionally, the project's outreach is also supported by Junior Achievement Europe, who ensures programme's implementation in the classroom environment.

As highlighted in the new European Innovation Agenda, the EIT Girls Go Circular will expand to all 27 European Union Member states by 2025. In 2023 alone, the project scaled up to 9 new countries, including Austria, Belgium, Estonia, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and Malta. In response to the growing importance of deep tech, the Girls Go Circular programme has introduced three new deep tech modules available in English on the online platform. Additionally, Junior Alumni was launched this year offering Girls Go Circular learners further opportunities and connections within the broader EIT community.

As of 2023, the program has achieved significant milestones. Over 31 000 girls have been trained in over 1000 schools across 23 countries since its inception in 2020. In 2023 alone, over 6 000 girls have been trained⁷, with another 9 000 expected to be trained by the end of the year. It's safe to say, that these achievements highlight the project's success in promoting gender diversity and empowering young women in digital and STEM fields across Europe.

Another EIT-led programme worth highlighting is the [Deep Tech Talent Initiative \(DDTI\)](#) – one of the flagship actions of the European Innovation Agenda, a pioneering programme to skill one million people within deep tech fields by 2025, sets a target of minimum 30% women among participants.

2.1.5. REGIONAL INNOVATION

One of the EIT GEP activities is related to the EIT programmes in [moderate and emerging innovators countries](#): *Introduce policies and measures to promote gender equality/ women's participation in the EIT KICs programmes in RIS countries.*

During 2023, the EIT Food and EIT Manufacturing further expended their women entrepreneurship and leadership RIS programmes: EWA and Leaders. At the same time, new Cross-KIC RIS Ukraine support initiative was successfully launched.

[EIT Food Empowering Women in Agrifood \(EWA\)](#) offers comprehensive support for women from RIS countries at an early stage of business idea's development, so that they can successfully start and run a sustainable business in the agri-food industry. The overall aim is to have more women leaders in the agrifood sector. Between 2020 – 2022 more than 260 women entrepreneurs have received support, mentoring and training from EWA. During 2023 the programme received 329 applications from 6 countries (Estonia, Poland, Serbia, Slovenia, Romania and Ukraine).

[EIT Manufacturing LEADERS](#) programme is a competition aiming to support the best women innovators (i.e., professionals, researchers, and entrepreneurs) from RIS countries. Women are selected for playing a leading role in developing solutions or initiatives addressing manufacturing-related challenges with strong financial, environmental, or societal impact. With this prize, EIT Manufacturing seeks to raise awareness of the need for

⁷ Data for period 01.01.2023 - 17.11.2023.



more women innovators in manufacturing and create role models for girls and women everywhere. Top-ranking applicants are invited to a grand final awarding ceremony where three winners receive publicity and prizes of EUR 10 000 for first place, EUR 7 500 for second, and EUR 5 000 for third.

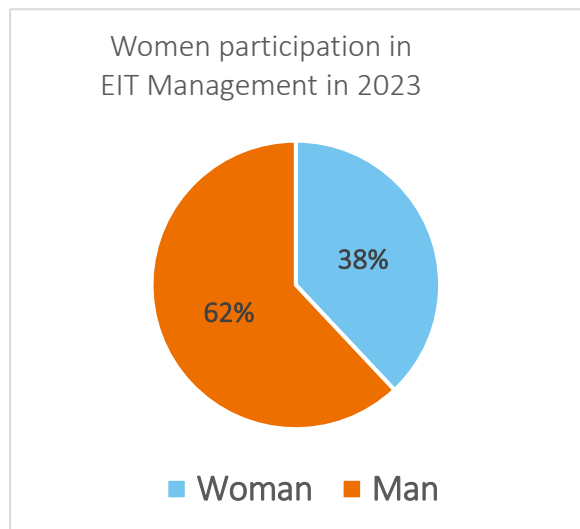
[Red Kalyna](#) (Cross-KIC) is a new initiative of the EIT Community and is supported by the [EIT Jumpstarter](#). It aims to recognise outstanding women entrepreneurs who have developed innovative products or solutions or have transformed their businesses into innovative ones. Every year, ten role models from Ukraine will be inducted into the Red Kalyna Hall of Fame, which will be further promoted. They will receive the “Red Kalyna by EIT Community” label to symbolise their strength and endurance. 2023 Award Ceremony will be taking place in Athens on 30 November.

2.2. ENSURING GENDER EQUALITY AT THE EIT, INCLUDING GENDER BALANCED REPRESENTATION IN EIT STAFF AND MANAGEMENT

The EIT second overarching objective outlines eight activities on: recruitment and promotion; retaining women talents; awareness raising and capacity building; and institutional set-up for the implementation of the EIT GEP; with clear KPIs and targets, to ensure strengthening gender equality, including increasing gender balance, at the EIT.

During 2023, the EIT efforts were focused on the area of recruitment and promotion, with the aim to ensure minimum 40% of the underrepresented gender in the EIT management by the end of 2024. To achieve this objective, the EIT took actions to increase the number of women candidates on short lists.

As a result, in 2023 the participation of women in the EIT Management has increased from 29% (5 men, 2 women) to 38% (5 men, 3 women), following the appointment of Ilaria Tagliavini as the new Head of Operations – Innovation, Education and Communication. Additionally, Caroline Vandenplas who was in the interim manager position, was appointed as the Head of Unit Communication & Engagement. Iuliana Vizitiu is an Acting Head of Unit Administration.



The EIT Social Policies, including: the EIT Director Decision on schooling and kindergarten; Working time and hybrid working rules, support parents, in majority of cases women, to combine caring roles and professional work.

In the area of awareness raising and capacity building – Info Session on the EIT work on gender equality was organised for all Staff in September 2023. As the next step, for 2024, the EIT is planning to focus its efforts on gender bias awareness raising and gender mainstreaming capacity building for the EIT Staff and Management.