



EIT CONTINUES TO TACKLE SKILLS GAP: INTRODUCING THE EUROPEAN SOLAR ACADEMY

20 February 2024 – Brussels, Belgium – The European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) is celebrating the EIT Summit today, where it announced the launch of a European Solar Academy, leveraging its exceptional innovation ecosystem for Europe. The new academy will support the European solar photovoltaic technologies and SMEs with a strong focus on training and reskilling employees. It will also reflect the EIT's intention to harness its established network to unleash a new wave of strategic innovations that increase Europe's competitiveness and sustainability. To date, the EIT Community has created 2 000 new products and services and supported over 7 800 start-ups that have raised over EUR 7 billion in private investment.

[WATCH THE EIT SUMMIT LIVE HERE](#)

The 2024 EIT Summit has attracted close to 800 participants, bringing together the worlds of policy, education and innovation and the coveted 2024 EIT Awards. Speakers included European Commission Vice-President, Margaritis Schinas, explorer and environmentalist, Bertrand Piccard, Members of European Parliament (MEP), Marc Dechamps and representatives from industry, policy, research and academia. This year's flagship event is putting the spotlight on new collaborations that will amplify the impact of the EIT ecosystem at a stage where its pan-European innovation ecosystem now commands an unprecedented capability to drive systemic change.

Margaritis Schinas, European Commissioner Vice-President said: 'Our greatest strength is the talents and skills we bring to form our Union. We need to address the tech and innovation divide head on at a European level to deliver the greatest impact. The EIT, as Europe's largest innovation network, stands ready to take this challenge forward. By connecting students, entrepreneurs and innovators, they not only tackle the skill divide that we face, but support businesses that accelerate the EU's green and digital resilience.

The newly announced European Solar Academy, with a starting budget of EUR 4 million, will build on the excellence of the *EIT Campus* complementing existing skilling programmes such as the European Battery Academy, targeting 800 000 workers in the battery supply chain, and the Deep Tech Talent Initiative which aims to skill one million workers in deep technologies by 2025. The new academy is an integral part of the European Union's *Green Deal Industrial Plan*, including the *Net-Zero Industry Act*.

During today's ceremony, the EIT has also introduced a collaboration with the Solar Impulse Foundation to accelerate the uptake of clean and profitable solutions that can be implemented on a large scale.

Nektarios Tavernarakis, Chair of the EIT Governing Board, commented: "With a record attendance, the EIT Summit highlights the full scale of our network: the success of over 2 000 new products created, more than 7 800 start-ups supported, and of course the fresh talent that is emerging from our



community on display at the EIT Awards . Our latest Academy builds on the core pillars of EIT support which include business creation and acceleration services, innovation driven research projects, and entrepreneurship education. The new Solar Academy also shows that the EIT ecosystem is a trusted network that is agile and ready to deliver on key policy priorities, as we have been doing for the past decade. We are proud to be entering a new milestone with our first three Innovation Communities, that will keep delivering support beyond EIT funding, showcasing a unique achievement for Europe and the EIT!”

The EIT Summit also features the 2024 EIT Award Ceremony, where the top innovators from the EIT Community compete in the following categories: the **Innovation Team Award** (recognising a team of innovators that developed a breakthrough product or service), the **Changemaker Award** (highlighting a leader within the EIT Community education and skilling programmes) and the **Venture Award** (recognises a start-up with the greatest potential to generate impact on citizens by addressing societal challenges). Each award comes with a monetary prize of EUR 50 000 (first place), EUR 20 000 (second place), and EUR 10 000 (third place). The public will also be able to have its say with the fourth category, the **Public Award**, giving [everyone a chance to vote](#) for their top innovation.

Watch the EIT Awards Ceremony [live stream](#) here starting at 16:50 CET

As an exciting addition for 2024, the EIT and the European Innovation Council (EIC) also introduced their new joint award – the European Prize for Women Innovators – and revealed the inaugural finalists. Find out more about the work EIT is doing in women entrepreneurship and Innovation [here](#).

INNOVEIT visits Hello Tomorrow, Greentech Festival and Slush in 2024

The EIT Summit, kicked off the [INNOVEIT](#) series for 2024, with three further EIT Community-led events following across Europe. INNOVEIT is your chance to connect with the continent’s largest innovation community and learn about each core pillar of EIT’s work: business creation, innovation projects, and entrepreneurship education. Come join us at the INNOVEIT events in:

- **Paris** alongside the **Hello Tomorrow Global Summit** for deeptech from **21-22 March**.
- **Berlin** as part of the **Greentech Festival** from **15-17 May**.
- **Helsinki** together with **Slush Conference 2024** from **20-21 November**.

BACKGROUND: 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 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.

