The EIT and its Innovation Communities present:

Connect & Experience UK 2024

We are excited to **officially open the call** for the 2024, and first-ever, UK Connect & Experience cohort. We invite you to join the European-UK community that offers a platform for peer learning and deep collaboration, aimed at enhancing EU start-up growth through collaboration opportunities, access to market and funding opportunities in the UK, and educating EU ecosystem leaders on best practices from the UK that you can apply to support and develop your own ecosystem.

Who are we? The **EIT Hub UK** is an initiative of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), aimed to create synergies between the European and the UK innovation ecosystems to support the growth of innovative start-ups and increase the number of EU-UK collaborative projects.

Call for participation

You are invited to apply to a one-of-a-kind, interactive educational experience and become part of an exclusive European-UK active innovation community.

What is Connect & Experience?

The programme encompasses three elements:

1. Intensive 5 day <u>in-person</u> professional training learning from the best aspects of the UK innovation ecosystem (29 September-4 October 2024)
2. European "Connect & Experience Playground" follow-up conference (March 2025)
3. Full access to the Connect & Experience innovation community network

1. **Professional Training in the UK**

This full stack 5-day immersion into the UK ecosystem goes beyond the usual introductions, and drills down to the key drivers of ecosystem building, by introducing participants to the key factors that underpin the success of the UK ecosystem and set it apart from other leading ecosystems in Europe. Key drivers include government funding schemes, academia and startups, the role of accelerators, community builders, corporates and more. This deep dive is designed to provide a genuine insight into one of the most vibrant innovation ecosystems in the world, all while providing the highest practical value and impact for participants, allowing you to take back key learnings and support EU startups to succeed in the UK.

The programme is highlighted by key names within the UK ecosystem who will share their experience and describe their role in making the UK the innovation success it is today. The programme will leverage existing know-how and best practices, will provide a broad access to mentors, hands-on training and tools to commercialise ideas, research and IP to better support your start-ups. It will also focus on how to avoid common pitfalls of ecosystem building and how to build a sustainable system in the process.

2. "Connect & Experience Playground" Follow up Conference

The annual highlight of the C&E community network – the European Playground is a professional conference that offers practical tools and strategies to develop and manage innovation communities and start-up support systems, bringing together professionals from all Connect & Experience participants across Europe, Japan, Silicon Valley, Israel and the UK.

Members will be offered the opportunity to design and co-facilitate content and workshops with a peer who has experience in connecting the public and private sector, as well as start-ups and corporate players. As such, the playground can be used as a testbed for new ideas and initiatives, receiving real time feedback and potential collaborations from leading experts in the field.

C&E alumni of 2024 will be entitled to a complementary ticket to the Playground if they are eligible for reimbursement (ticket value €350).

3. Full access to the active C&E Community Network

Connect & Experience offers more than training. The C&E community network is an active online and offline community offering easy access to opportunities, curated content, matchmaking, soft landing services and support. The community offers a space for community builders from the UK and Europe to interact, share best practices and collaborate, with the common goal of enhancing your start-up community.

Why should I apply?

- Learn from a **leading ecosystem building** educational programme with a high calibre of participants and expert facilitators;
- **Access top tools to become a leader in your field by** learning best practices of ecosystem management, including community building, tech tools, network leveraging and more;
- **Experience the start-up journey**, and effective tools to support it, developed exclusively for the 2024 cohort;
- Get **immersed** and build sustainable partnerships **in one of the most innovative ecosystems in the world;**

- Become a part of an **exclusive community network** of strategic players in ecosystem building, get ongoing support, access to events and a matchmaking service from the EIT Hub UK.

Who should apply?

The ideal participant is a European **experienced senior professional,** at management/decision making level, in an organisation boosting European start-up growth, significantly impacting the European ecosystem. The participant should deal with **innovation** or **business creation,** with a minimum of **5 years** of relevant professional experience from at least one of the following sectors: industry, academia, government. As such, they should be able to contribute knowledge, experience and network to the programme and provide added value to their peers (for example, heads of accelerators, VCs, innovation agencies, labs, incubators or other business creation activities from academia, industry and government and TTOs).

The programme is not suited for individual start-ups or consultants.

Eligible applicants are divided in to four categories:

1. **EIT KIC Partners**[1] and KIC cooperating entities under the EIT Regional Innovation Scheme (RIS) from the four KICs involved in the UK Hub: EIT Health, EIT Climate-KIC, EIT Manufacturing, and EIT Digital.
2. **EIT KIC Staff** – from the four KICs involved in the Israel Hub: EIT Health, EIT Climate-KIC, EIT Manufacturing, and EIT Digital.
3. **Partner/staff from other KICs** – EIT Food, EIT Culture & Creativity, EIT InnoEnergy, and EIT RawMaterials and EIT Urban Mobility
4. **Ecosystem Managers** not employed by EIT or EIT KIC Partners

Assessment Process:

Each application will be reviewed and ranked by the following criteria:

- Impact of your organisation and programme on the European Innovation ecosystem (i.e. the number of start-ups you meet weekly) – 50% of the score
- Professional role and seniority level – 30% of the score

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[1] Participants from all EIT KICs are invited to apply, however funding will be offered only to employees and partners of the four KICs active in the UK Hub: EIT Health, EIT Climate-KIC, EIT Manufacturing, and EIT Digital. See more in the finance section.

- Motivation and added value to the programme – 20% of the score
- An online interview may be required as an additional evaluation criterion

The selection will be competitive and based upon excellence and the above-noted criteria. The final selection will be made by the EIT Hub UK Steering Committee (with members representing EIT Health, EIT Climate-KIC, EIT Manufacturing, and EIT Digital).

Finance:

The full cost of the programme is €4,000, which includes all programme learning, activities and food during the programme hours (typically lunch and dinner). Participants are generally expected to provide their own travel to London and accommodation including breakfast for the duration of the programme. The EIT Hub UK can offer partial funding of the programmes and/or Travel & Accommodation reimbursement based on the following categories:

Category Number	Participant Category	Eligible KICs	Eligibility for Programme Funding	Eligibility for Travel and Accommodation Reimbursement
1	**KIC Partners** and KIC cooperating entities under the EIT Regional Innovation Scheme (RIS)	4 KICs: EIT Health, EIT Climate- KIC, EIT Manufacturing, and EIT Digital	Fully funded	Reimbursement up to €1,500 per participant per module
2	**KIC Employees**	4 KICs: EIT Health, EIT Climate- KIC, EIT Manufacturing, and EIT Digital	Fully funded	Financed by the KIC's own resources
3	**Partner/Staff** from other KICs	EIT Food, EIT InnoEnergy, EIT RawMaterials, EIT Urban Mobility and EIT Culture & Creativity	75% Funded; Price: €1,000	Financed by participant's own resources
4	**Ecosystem Manager** from any Horizon-eligible country (Non EIT)	Any individual professional can apply	50% Funded; Price: €2,000	Financed by participant's own resources

Timeline:

Call for applications:

- Application Opens: **Wednesday 12 June 2024**
- Application Closes: **Wednesday 14 August 2024 (**09:00 CET**)**
- Selection announcement and travel arrangements: **Friday 16 August 2024**

Onboarding webinar for accepted participants: **Thursday 5 September 2024, 11:00 CET**

Visit to UK: **Sunday 29 September – Friday 4 October 2024**

Follow up conference European "Playground": **TBC March 2025**

All communication about the programme will be through the email address provided by applicants in the application form.

Outline Agenda for the UK Visit

*The below agenda is subject to change

Day 0: Welcome and Cultural immersion to the UK

Begin your journey with a welcome event and cultural immersion in London, the heart of the UK Ecosystem, seeing landmark sights, meeting your fellow participants, and understanding the foundation of this uniquely successful ecosystem.

Day 1: Welcome to the UK Ecosystem

The aim of the day is to expose the participants to the structures, key success factors and methods that have enabled the UK to become a hotbed of innovation. We will learn the deep connections and roots of the innovation landscape as well as emerging trends.

Presentations and intimate discussions by ecosystem key-players such as:

- **Innovate UK** and **London & Partners** will present practical tools and funding platforms, and share insights on the dynamic opportunities and emerging trends of the local innovation ecosystem.
- **UK Academia Experts** from the most successful Tech Transfer Offices will share their innovation programs and best practices for tech transfer from lab to market.
- Case studies by **top UK start-ups** - successes in commercialisation.
- **Funding Platforms** – how the UK has been so successful in attracting international capital and attention.

The day will finish with a VIP cocktail event.

Day 2: Accelerator visit and Leading Innovation Ecosystems Workshop

We'll spend the day in Shoreditch, arguably the heart of the London ecosystem, visiting a **top accelerator** and start-ups and learning first-hand what makes them successful.

During the afternoon, participate in the Leading Innovation Ecosystems Workshop. After being exposed to the UK ecosystem, it's time to bring it home. During a tailored workshop, particiants will present and discuss their own ecosystem challenges and initiatives.

The workshop will be facilitated by UK experts who will share their own challenges and present frameworks and best practices to boost start-up growth.

Activities include:

- Presentation and discussion of individual ecosystem challenges
- Exposure to a comprehensive ecosystem management model
- Development of personal use cases, including mapping, leveraging strengths and overcoming obstacles

We'll finish the day with a group meal in Dishoom, one of London's legendary Indian restaurants.

Day 3 – Ecosystem Development Field Trip to Cambridge

Venture away from London to Cambridge, a city known as 'Silicon Fen' for its outstanding success in fostering a strong innovation system through its world-leading university and research institutions. As of 2023, Cambridge has seen the birth of 23 unicorns, is home to over 5,000 tech firms, and the University alone contributes four times as much to the UK economy as the Premier League.

Learn about:

- How this success was by design from key figures at institutions at the heart of the 'Cambridge phenomenon' such as **Cambridge Innovation Capital** and **University of Cambridge Enterprise**
- The drivers of success from leading companies such as **ARM**, **Microbiotica** and **VividQ**.

Day 4 – Attend the Sifted Summit in London

We'll spend a day participating in the Sifted Summit, which will showcase the revival of the European startup scene, allowing you to listen to, learn from, and network with 3000 startups, investors, ecosystem managers. There will be tracks on fintech, health tech, climate tech, deeptech and more.

We'll round off the day at the conference after party to maximise the outstanding networking opportunities.

Day 5- Moving Forward

After you have been exposed to the UK Ecosystem, it's time to reflect and think of what's next.

We will also discuss how we can tailor the lessons and opportunities learned in the UK to your unique ecosystem's characteristics. We will introduce the C&E community and share future plans and events.

Meals and transportation during programme hours will be included.

How to apply?

- Apply online at https://go-eit.eu/eit-uk-hub/ or email leslie.harris@eithubuk.eu for application details.
- Applicants will be required to include in their submission: CV and a letter of support signed by their organization.
- As detailed above, participants will be assessed according to their European innovation impact, seniority level, professional experience and motivation. An individual online interview might be scheduled as an additional evaluation criterion.
- Final selection of participants is expected by **16 August 2024.**
- For any questions please contact: info@eithubuk.eu or leslie.harris@eithubuk.eu

FAQ

- **Does the programme require me to physically attend the week in the UK?**
  Yes, participation physically in the UK is required, and it is the core Connect & Experience event that provides you with professional training, and builds the community. You will have the chance to explore London and Cambridge, meet UK peers and learn from one of the world's leading innovation ecosystems.

- **Who will we meet during the programme?**
  The cohort will be comprised of ecosystem leaders from all over Europe that were carefully selected to join the programme. You will meet peers and ecosystem leaders from the UK, top speakers and lecturers on many topics, executives from global companies active in the UK, and more.

- **Who is considered an ecosystem leader?**

An ecosystem leader is an experienced senior professional, at management/decision-making level, in an organisation boosting European start-up growth, and significantly impacting the European ecosystem. They should deal with innovation or business creation in industry, academia, government (for example, VCs, TTOs, heads of accelerators, innovation agencies, labs, incubators, or other business creation activities from academia, industry and government).

- **What topics will be covered during the bootcamp in the UK?**
  The programme encompasses a wide variety of subjects, including an overview of the UK ecosystem and meetings with leading figures from the industry. You will have the chance to get your hands 'dirty' and delve into an ecosystem building workshop in Shoreditch, visit academic and industry hotspot Cambridge and top accelerators, meet with VCs and many others at the Sifted Summit, and be inspired by the cultural and innovation landscape of the UK.

- **How much does the programme cost?**
  The full cost of the programme is €4,000, but there is a variety of funding available depending on the category of the participant. Please see the finance section for more information.

- **What does the selection process look like?**
  The applicants will be ranked according to the criteria noted here and the final decision as to the participants will be made by the EIT Hub UK steering committee. Applicants will receive responses by 16 August 2024.

  If you wish to query or appeal the outcome of your application, please email info@eithubuk.eu by Friday 24 August 2024. Please explain your query or grounds for appeal as clearly as possible.

- **What can I expect as an outcome of the programme?**
  Past participants have established long-standing collaborations with both experts they met in the host country and members of the cohort. You can expect to be left with a change of mindset that will enable you to approach your day-to-day activities with a new-found sense of purpose, as well as a tangible toolkit to establish the best practices you were exposed to. The wider Connect & Experience community is extremely active with activities taking place on a regular basis, so you can expect to expand your network and be part of a supportive and professional group of people.

- **Why the UK?**

London, and the UK more widely, is regularly ranked as the #2 start-up ecosystem in the world, with deep pockets of investment and talent in a range of areas. It outnumbers its counterparts in Europe in multiple measures, and has remained resilient over the past few years. London alone boasts a tech ecosystem valued at over $620 billion, and is home to over 100 unicorns. While the UK showcases diverse talent and opportunity, it is particularly renowned for its strength in climate tech, fintech and big data and analytics.

Annex 1: Sub-grant Agreement