

EIT Stakeholder Forum 2020

Background for the Online Consultation: *The EIT Regional Innovation Scheme Post-2020*

Introduction

The EIT launched its Regional Innovation Scheme (EIT RIS)¹ in 2014 to reduce regional disparities in innovation performance across Europe. Through the initiative, the EIT has enhanced its outreach to countries with modest or moderate innovation performance² that have limited participation in the activities of the [EIT Knowledge and Innovation Communities \(KICs\)](#).

Today, 28 countries are eligible to take part in the EIT RIS based on their performance as modest or moderate innovators:

- **EU Member States:** Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain
- **H2020 Associated Countries:** Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Faroe Islands, Georgia, Moldova, Montenegro, Republic of North Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey, Ukraine

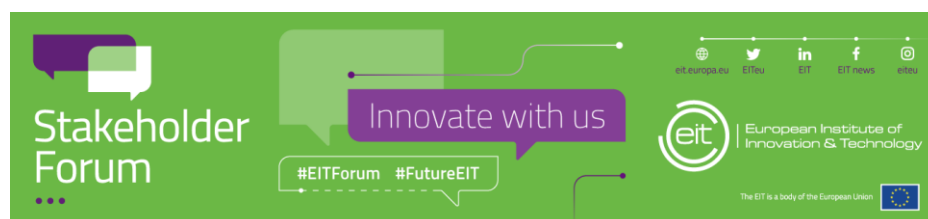
Weak linkages between business, research, and academia, as well as between the private and public sectors, hinder innovation. Fewer participants in the EIT Community's activities come from countries with lower innovation performance. The EIT Regional Innovation Scheme aims to address Europe's innovation gap by facilitating access to the activities offered by the EIT KICs and providing tailor-made programmes for EIT RIS countries. For example, the EIT KICs have set up business creation and competition programmes for entrepreneurs in EIT RIS countries. These programmes help start-ups grow and showcase local innovations.

To promote and implement their activities in the EIT RIS countries, the EIT KICs engage local organisations to serve as EIT Hubs. These Hubs mobilise local actors to take part in joint activities with the EIT KICs. To date, **the EIT KICs have established 64 EIT Hubs in 18 countries³** to implement activities (e.g.

¹ You can read more about the EIT RIS [HERE](#). The EIT RIS Report 2018 is available [HERE](#).

² According to the [European Innovation Scoreboard](#)

³ Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Turkey



entrepreneurship and innovation training programmes), work on major challenges (e.g. climate change, circular economy, sustainable food production), and implement innovation projects (e.g. dealing with health and raw materials).

During 2016-2019, over 1,500 early stage start-up teams were supported through the EIT KICs' entrepreneurship support programmes designed especially for the EIT RIS countries. One highlight is the [EIT Jumpstarter](#), a pre-accelerator programme that cultivates innovative ideas and connects innovations to the demands of industry stakeholders in healthcare, agri-food, raw materials, energy, urban mobility and manufacturing. This outstanding programme won the 2019 European Training Association Award and the 2020 Emerging Europe Award in the Young Empowerment Initiative category.

Facts and Figures

Since 2014, the EIT RIS has accomplished the following in countries where the EIT KICs had a limited presence⁴:

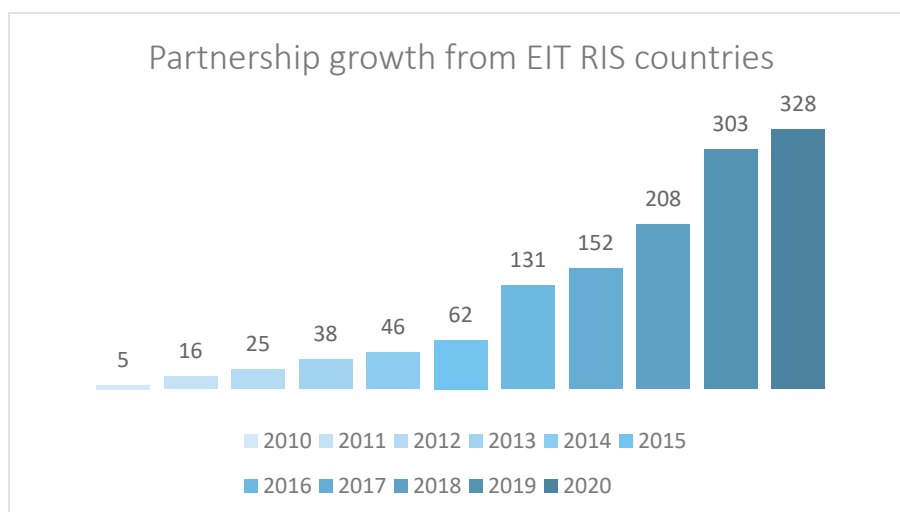
- The number of **EIT partners from the EIT RIS countries has increased by 613%** and the number of EIT RIS countries involved in the EIT's activities has increased by 850%.
- **EIT funding** received by partner organisations from the EIT RIS countries has **increased three-fold**.
- The percentage of **start-ups supported** by the KICs coming from EIT RIS countries **increased from 21% in 2017 to 24% in 2019**.

Although the share of EIT-supported start-ups coming from EIT RIS countries has grown, these ventures have so far managed to secure a low level of investment compared to other EIT-backed start-ups. Start-ups from EIT RIS countries did not attract even 2% of the total investment garnered by EIT-backed start-ups.

The graph below illustrates how quickly the number of EIT partners from the EIT RIS countries has grown:

⁴ Italy and Spain are not included in the statistics as both countries have enjoyed broad participation in the EIT KICs' networks and activities.





The Future of the EIT RIS

In June 2018, the European Commission published its proposal for [Horizon Europe](#), the next research and innovation framework programme that will succeed Horizon 2020. The EIT has been prominently placed in the proposal's Pillar III – Open Innovation. In July 2019, the European Commission proposed an update to the [EIT Regulation](#) and a new [Strategic Innovation Agenda for 2021-2027](#), which will determine our future priorities. The Commission proposal gives an enhanced mandate to the EIT and suggests several [new features](#), including an increased regional focus for the EIT and its Knowledge and Innovation Communities.

The Commission proposal includes the following:

- **The EIT will increase its openness to potential partners and stakeholders.** The EIT KICs will develop their regional strategies by taking into account the European Commission's [Smart Specialisation Strategies](#). KICs will connect with local Smart Specialisation Strategies and with the activities of relevant thematic platforms and inter-regional initiatives (e.g. the Managing Authorities of ESI Funds). The EIT will monitor how CLCs operate and integrate locally.
- **The EIT RIS will become an integral part of the EIT KICs' multi-annual strategies.** The EIT will support its KICs in the preparation of these strategies and their implementation.
- **Greater support will be given to EIT RIS activities** that boost the innovation capacities of countries with lower innovation performance. The EIT budget for EIT RIS activities will account for a greater share of the EIT's overall funding for KICs to increase the number of partners from targeted regions.



- **Activities supported through the EIT RIS will unleash the innovative potential of local ecosystems** through capacity-building activities and close cooperation between innovation actors (clusters, networks, regional authorities, Higher Education Institutions, research organisations). It will link local innovation ecosystems to pan-European networks via the EIT KICs and their co-locations centres (CLCs).
- **Each KIC will be required to develop a strategy for strengthening its relationship with regional and local innovation actors.** The EIT will actively monitor the implementation of these strategies. A 'place-based' innovation approach will become part of the EIT KICs' strategies/business plans. This approach will build on the KICs' CLCs (and EIT RIS) by leveraging their role as gateways for local access to KIC communities.

