

EIT Regional Innovation Scheme (EIT RIS)

Implementation Guidance Note

This guidance note aims at providing updated implementing rules for the EIT Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) based on the objectives, main principles and characteristics of the EIT RIS in line with the provisions set out in the amended EIT Regulation and Strategic Innovation Agenda (SIA). It also offers continuation for its operationalization, in line with the Background note no. 00757.EIT.2014.D and the previous Implementation Guidance Note no. 00263.EIT.2015.D.MK.

The development and implementation of a fully-fledged EIT RIS by the EIT and its KICs was designed as a gradual process, which will be based on lessons learnt from the implementation of 2014, 2015 outreach activities plus the full implementation of the EIT RIS activities in 2016. The EIT supported the KICs in the implementation of the EIT RIS by organising dedicated workshops clarifying key principles and sharing lessons learnt as well as identifying potential challenges.

1. Objectives and Key Principles

From the semantic point of view the outreach is defined as an activity of engaging and providing services to those who might not otherwise have access to those activities or services. In addition to delivering services, outreach has an educational role, raising the awareness of existing activities and services.

Starting with 2014, when the EIT became part of the Horizon 2020 family, the activities with a concrete focus on strengthening the integration of the Knowledge Triangle and providing added value to KICs, became more prominent. Based on previous valuable initiatives, the EIT will further develop a comprehensive global outreach strategy, built upon its current relations with prioritised Third Countries and international organisations. In doing so, the EIT will co-operate closely with the European Commission and KICs thus increase its ambition in striving to create synergies beyond Europe.

As stated in the Background note of April 2014, the EIT RIS is a structured outreach scheme fully in line with the EIT's mission to support the integration of the Knowledge Triangle and increase the innovation capacity in areas/ regions in Europe not yet directly benefitting from the EIT and its KICs. It is based on a two-way engagement between KICs and selected partnerships from the wider European innovation community and is based on the following key principles:

➤ Coherent and structured outreach scheme

The EIT RIS is a structured outreach scheme which forms an integral part of the KIC's overall strategy. It has clearly defined strategic objectives translated into targeted activities and resulting in concrete outcomes.

➤ **Excellence**

The EIT RIS is targeted at excellent partnerships representing the three sides of the Knowledge Triangle - leading higher education institutions, research organisations and businesses - as well as other stakeholders essential in spurring regional innovation, such as regional policy makers and public entities. With a view to fully embrace opportunities for enhancing innovation capacity, the EIT RIS implemented by the KICs aims at capitalising on the untapped potential offered by the diversity of regions in Europe. If harnessed well, it will allow the EIT and its KICs to extend their reach to new geographical areas and to reach out to excellent partnerships of the Knowledge Triangle.

➤ **Thematic alignment**

EIT RIS partnerships should demonstrate a clear thematic alignment with EIT themes and KIC specific focus areas. With a view to ensure strategic impact at larger scale, they explicitly refer to relevant regional innovation plans, including the Smart Specialisation Strategies (RIS3) designed to boost regional innovation in order to achieve economic growth and prosperity by enabling regions to focus on their strengths.

➤ **Voluntary and autonomous implementation by KICs**

KICs implement the EIT RIS on a voluntary and autonomous basis. Implementation will be driven primarily by the co-location centres as hubs of the Knowledge Triangle integration.

Implementation by the KICs according to the given guidance will be part of the competitive funding as of year 2016 based on the planned activities included in the Business Plan 2016.

➤ **Openness and transparency**

EIT RIS partnerships will be selected by the KICs through open and transparent processes. Participation in the EIT RIS does not imply automatically a potential future partnership with a KIC, although this is strongly encouraged by the EIT in response to the expressions of interest already formulated by several EU Member States through the European Parliament during the negotiations for the EIT Strategic Innovation Agenda 2014-2020 responding to decision-makers request to widen participation in EIT/KIC activities for Member States/ regions not yet involved. However, the strategic decisions on the widening (and/or deepening) of their partnership remain solely at the discretion of the KICs.

Call for partnerships are requested to be organized at the level of the Co-location Centres (CLCs), ensuring thus a wide dissemination and advertisement through different channels.

2. Targeted areas for the EIT RIS

As described in the EIT Strategic Innovation Agenda (Decision No 1312/2013/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council), *'The EIT can play the decisive role in synthesising the diversity of approaches applied by the KICs and in making them transferable in areas where innovation capacity is weak, and which would otherwise not be able to benefit from the experience gained by the EIT.'* Therefore the main objective of the EIT RIS will be aiming at reducing the innovation and knowledge gap between the most advanced and less developed European countries, the following two categories will be considered as targeted areas:

- I. Countries which belong to the 'moderate and modest innovators' groups according to the 2015 Innovation Union Scoreboard¹. The measurement framework used in the Innovation Union Scoreboard analysis three innovation dimensions: Enablers, Firm activities and Outputs. The

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/growth/industry/innovation/facts-figures/scoreboards/files/ius-2015_en.pdf

composite indicators into take into account inter alia statistics on human resources, excellent research, public and private investment in R&D activities, patent applications, trademarks and employment. EIT as an EU body targeting the integration of the knowledge triangle has similar interests in analysing the human capital, the excellent research systems, entrepreneurship, firm investments and economic effects.

- The performance of Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia and Spain is below that of the EU average. These countries are “*Moderate innovators*”;
- Bulgaria, Latvia and Romania are “*Modest innovators*” with innovation performance well below that of the EU average.

This criterion should be combined with those EU MS which have no participating organisations into the three existing KICs (as of 1 January 2015).

The selected corrective measure above has been chosen in line with the particular policy requirements of the measure, to ensure the greatest possible impact through targeting only the lowest performing Member States which experience no exposure to the KIC activities, and thereby maximising the real value of these actions.

Based on the above thresholds, applicant organisations from the following 17 Member States will be eligible within the EIT RIS: Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, Bulgaria, Latvia, Romania and Slovenia.

- II. Applicants from the following Associated Countries (subject to the future association agreements of third countries with Horizon 2020) will also be eligible to submit proposals: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Faroe Islands, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, Ukraine and Turkey.

The outreach activities will be targeting countries outside Europe, most specifically the BRICs (Brazil, Russia, India and China), USA, to create synergies beyond Europe and to contribute to the efforts of the European Union’s and Member States’ international engagement to continuously enhance the success of their innovations on the global scene. **These countries will not be eligible for funds within the EIT RIS.**

3. Implementation

Open calls for participation to the EIT RIS are to be organised and thus the KICs would be able to demonstrate that the selection was based on excellent merits of the applicants which will become real change agents promoting the integration of the knowledge triangle and further develop a regional innovation community. KICs should be able to demonstrate that the selection criteria are explicitly mentioning the thematic area (i.e. innovative energies, ICT, climate change etc.) and the link to relevant national/regional innovation plans.

The KICs strategies for attracting new partners should be integrative, place-based economic transformation agendas and:

- build on each country's strengths, competitive advantages and potential for excellence;
- support technological as well as practice-based innovation and aim to stimulate private sector investment;

- get stakeholders fully involved and encourage innovation and experimentation;
- provide evidence-based and include sound monitoring and evaluation systems.

The KICs will select the EIT RIS activities based on the following eligibility (A) and selection (B) criteria:

A. Eligibility Criteria:

- Compliance with the description of the nature of the KIC activities (which consist of KIC added value activities to be supported by the specific grant and KIC complementary activities having a clear link with at least one KIC added value activity and not financed from the EIT contribution) as specified in the Art. 2(2) of the new FPA;
- Compliance with the definition of the KIC-added value activities as specified in the Art. 2(11) of the EIT Regulation;
- Feasibility to be implemented within the framework of at least one of the following Business Plans Areas (Pillars): Education; Entrepreneurship/Business Creation; Research and Innovation;
- Thematic alignment (to a certain extent) with at least of one the KIC's specific focus areas;
- Existence of a "parental" KAVA that has been implemented as the regular KAVA and based on which the RIS activity has been designed. *NOTA BENE:* The existence of the parental KAVA should not prevent the KICs from designing a tailor-made EIT RIS-specific KIC activities as the parental KAVA will serve only as a source of the best practice and lessons learnt.

B. Selection criteria:

Essential

- Contribution to the knowledge triangle integration - i.e. the RIS activities that contribute to the KT integration should be linked to more than one of the Business Plans Areas (Education; Entrepreneurship/Business Creation; Research and Innovation);
- Contribution to the achievement of the target values of the EIT core KPIs and KIC-specific KPIs;

Advantageous:

- Addressing of the developmental needs as specified in the regional innovation plan of the given EIT RIS region;
- Contribution to the mobility of undergraduates/graduates and professionals from the given RIS region taking part the KIC educational programmes;
- Creation of the IP rights that would be retained in the given RIS region;
- Creation of the new jobs located in the given RIS region;
- Creation of the research and innovation driven start-ups registered in the given EIT RIS region.

4. Activities

Activities undertaken as part of the EIT RIS will ensure the flow of both knowledge and people between KICs and selected partnerships with a view to enhance the regional innovation capacity by fostering the integration of the Knowledge Triangle. EIT RIS activities are an integral part of the KICs' operations. They

are designed by KICs in a fit-for-purpose way taking into account their own specificities, overall strategy and portfolio in order to optimise the potential benefits and impact for both the participants and the KICs themselves.

The EIT RIS will strengthen the untapped innovative potential of those regions and their efforts will tackle the knowledge triangle in an integrated approach, i.e.: higher education, research and innovation and to embrace a strong, open and true entrepreneurial culture, which is essential to nurture and support capturing the value of research and innovation, for setting-up new ventures and achieve actual market deployment of innovations in potential high-growth sectors.

Example of eligible activities:

- promoting business investment in R&I, developing links and synergies between enterprises, research and development centres and the higher education sector, in particular promoting investment in product and service development, technology transfer, social innovation, public service applications, demand stimulation, networking, clusters and open innovation through smart specialisation, and supporting technological and applied research, pilot lines, early product validation actions, advanced manufacturing capabilities and first production, in particular in key enabling technologies and diffusion of general purpose technologies.

Outcomes By collaborating with excellent partnerships from across Europe's regions, both **KICs** and the EIT RIS target areas will benefit from an **exchange of talent and ideas** which add value to their activities and amplify their impact in spurring innovation. Selected partnerships may act as test beds for the EIT and its KICs with a view to explore how Knowledge Triangle governance and activities could be replicated in and how lessons learnt and emerging good practices can be transferred successfully to a multitude of environments.

The EIT RIS activities should result in the following outcomes:

A) General outcomes - verifiable only from the mid-term or long-term prospective and not directly linked to the EIT core Key Performance Indicators (KPI) and KIC-specific KPIs:

- Addressing of the developmental needs as specified in the development plan of the given EIT RIS region;
- Concerning the individuals from the RIS regions who participated in the EIT RIS scheme (educational activities) – their ability to establish a start-up registered in the given RIS region;
- Concerning the entities from the RIS regions that took part in the KIC Entrepreneurship/Business Creation activities (i.e. start-ups) – the ability of these entities to attract funding (e.g. venture capital) and become profitable in the mid-term prospective;
- Entities from the RIS regions that took part in the EIT RIS scheme are becoming the KIC partners;
- Entities from the EIT RIS regions that participated in the EIT RIS scheme are being able to set up a regional or national scheme aimed at the strengthening of the knowledge triangle integration (i.e. they will “replicate” the EIT's mission on the regional or national level).

B) Specific outcomes – linked to the EIT core KPIs and KIC-specific KPIs. These are the quantifiable outcomes verifiable in the short-term prospective and representing the direct contribution to achievement of the target values (pre-defined specifically for the RIS activities) of the EIT core KPIs and KIC-specific KPIs:

- Contribution to the achievement of the predefined target values of the EIT core KPIs (i.e. the specific contribution of the RIS activities to these EIT core KPIs) according to the ones specified in Annex II of the 2017 Business Plan;
- Contribution to the achievement of the predefined target values of the KIC-specific KPIs (as defined individually by each KIC, e.g. number of patents, publications, jobs created etc.)

5. Funding

The EIT will encourage participation in outreach activities, set incentives and provide support, to the KICs in their implementation of the EIT RIS.

In order to mainstream the EIT RIS action into KICs activities, the EIT will earmark a dedicated budget (10% of the competitive EIT annual contribution to the KICs, starting with the 2016 financial allocation, continuing also in 2017) which will be granted based on competitive criteria, taking into account the excellence, the European added-value for the region and the cost-effectiveness of the proposed actions.

- The EIT funds will cover up to 100% of the eligible costs (KAVA), being able to mobilize additional funds through co-financing;
- KAVA will represent cutting edge activities dedicated to the implementation of an integrated knowledge transfer, fully-fledged by educational, innovation and entrepreneurial activities, in line with the annual KICs Business Plans.

Selected EIT RIS partnerships will be encouraged to attract “other sources” of funding, in the form of co-funding, such as national and regional funding, including private funds and own resources to participate in the EIT RIS. EIT financial support to the EIT RIS implementation will be in the form of incentive funding with a view to encourage additional private investment and to consider a risk taken approach in financing innovation.

Emphasis should be put on promoting innovation and the development of start-ups and SMEs, in emerging fields linked to European and regional challenges such as creative and innovative services, reflecting new societal demands, or to products and services aimed to support the employment and leading to the economic growth of the regions towards the low-carbon economy and resource efficiency.

An activity may receive support from the EIT RIS financial scheme provided that the expenditure item included in the claim cost does not receive support from another grant coming from the European Union instrument/programme.

The specific part of the KIC Business Plan referring to the EIT RIS will be evaluated by the EIT with the support of the external independent experts, in order to establish the level of financial allocation based on a cross-KIC competitive process.

6. Dissemination of Information and Promotion

In order to ensure a wide participation in the EIT RIS, it is paramount to widely disseminate information about the planned activities, opportunities and results envisaged of the EIT RIS. Potential EIT RIS participants need easy and timely access to all relevant information in a structured and coherent

manner, especially with regard to participation in planned mobility actions funded by the EIT. KICs shall ensure that information on the implementation of the EIT RIS is widely disseminated and easily accessible. Moreover, KICs shall provide the EIT with relevant information and feedback on the implementation of the EIT RIS and its concrete results. They shall “inter alia” be:

- Number of selected partnerships
- Number of SMEs receiving support
- Support to the EIT Core KPIs
- Level of mobilizing co-funding, targeted audience, outreach and dissemination.

The EIT actively encourages and incentivises participation in the EIT RIS. The EIT will work closely with KICs to support and amplify their outreach and dissemination efforts and to ensure a consistent promotion of the EIT RIS among all stakeholders, notably via a dedicated EIT RIS gateway on the EIT website and via the annual EIT Stakeholder Forum and its Member State configuration.

Annex I

List of the eligible countries

- 1) Bulgaria
- 2) Croatia
- 3) Cyprus
- 4) Czech Republic
- 5) Estonia
- 6) Greece
- 7) Hungary
- 8) Italy
- 9) Latvia
- 10) Lithuania
- 11) Malta
- 12) Poland
- 13) Portugal
- 14) Slovakia
- 15) Slovenia
- 16) Spain
- 17) Romania
- 18) Albania
- 19) Bosnia and Herzegovina
- 20) Faroe Islands
- 21) Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
- 22) Moldova
- 23) Montenegro
- 24) Serbia
- 25) Turkey
- 26) Ukraine