

## **Policy Brief**

Innovating through knowledge:  
*European Institute of Innovation  
and Technology 2027* – and why it  
matters

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## Introduction

Innovation through research and development has been a long-term objective throughout the European funding frameworks. With the start of the 2021 – 2027 cycle of Horizon Europe, EU's innovation institutions are continuing, but also setting more ambitious priorities and launching new components and programs.

Continuing [EUROPEUM](#)'s series on EU innovation momentum, this article presents the [European Institute of Innovation and Technology](#) (EIT) as one of the major components of the Horizon Europe Innovation pillar. A detailed look at the [EIT strategic agenda](#) for 2021 – 2027, its programs and objectives, reveals the prominence of knowledge, networking and regional focus as common denominators of the European innovation agenda for the coming years. Having created over 60 innovation hubs across Europe, [EIT's goal](#) is to support and connect European start-ups and NGOs, providing training, education and funding. To this end, it has supported more than 4.700 start-ups in collaboration with 1284 companies and almost 600 higher education and research institutions, in addition to 193 cities, regions and NGOs.

As part of Horizon Europe, the EIT's priorities [align with the former](#) in supporting science and research, but also focusing on its practical impact and application. Its agenda [complements](#) the role of the newly established [European Innovation Council](#). Particularly, EIT maintains a strong focus on harnessing the specific innovation capacity of regions – for the regional benefit. Another strong

component is building knowledge communities and connecting them across Europe.

## Communities of knowledge

EIT implements its mission through its [Knowledge and Innovation Communities](#) (KICs). Currently counting with 8 of these clusters, each one is focused on one of the key societal or environmental challenges. The KIC act as executive arms of sorts, implementing the EIT's mission – each of them based in a different European city, coordinating a thematic area, and collaborating with relevant organizations, cities and companies across Europe:

[EIT Climate](#) cluster focuses on climate sustainability and innovation with a goal of achieving a net zero emissions economy by 2050.

[EIT Digital](#) addresses the digital transformation of organizations and processes by connecting over 200 business and research organizations across Europe.

[EIT Food](#) mobilizes research, businesses (including start-ups), universities and consumers for conscious production and consumption of food products.

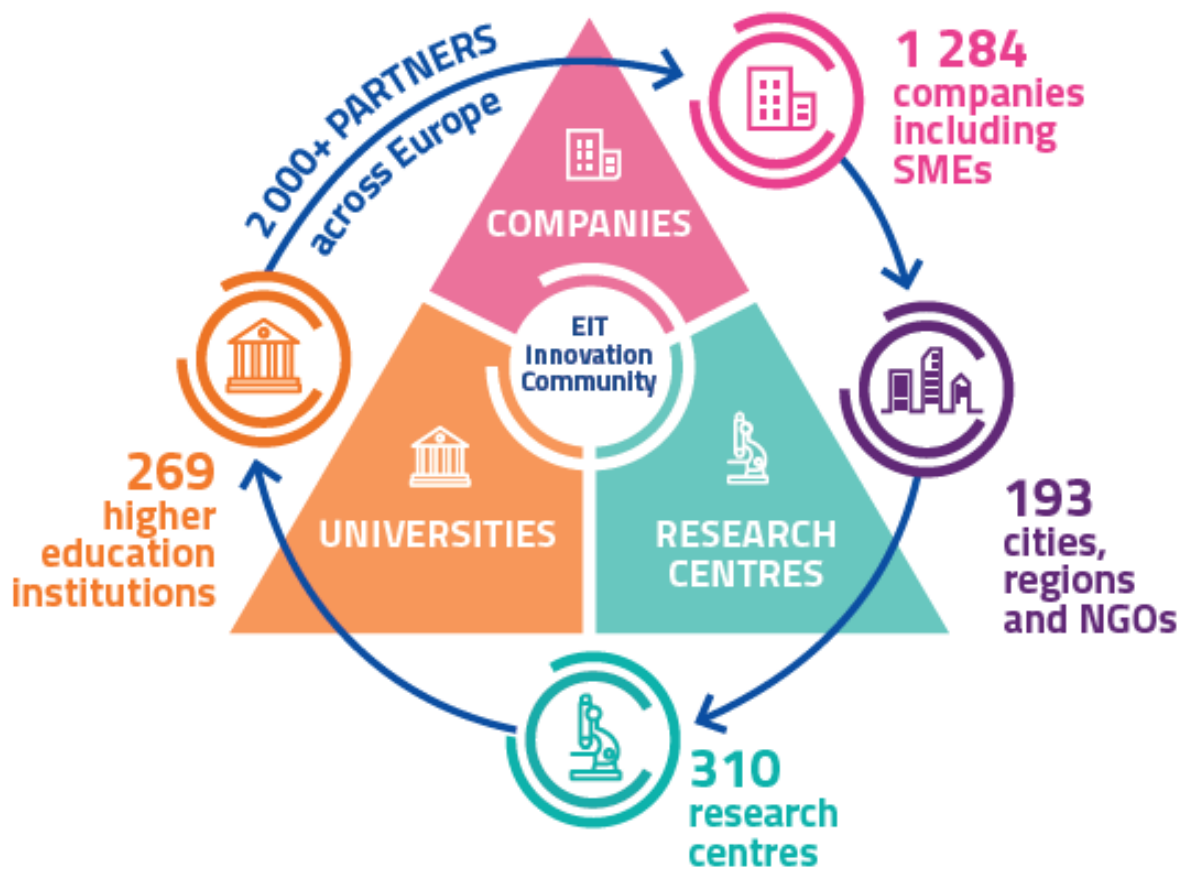
[EIT Health](#) focuses on the area of research and entrepreneurship connected to healthcare provision, disease prevention and public awareness.

[EIT InnoEnergy](#) mobilizes key private and public stakeholders to bring innovative energy solutions to the table, often developed by European startups and SMEs.



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## Europe's largest innovation community



EIT and KIC partner organizations - [infographic](#).

Figure from August 2020.



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[EIT Manufacturing](#) focuses on aligning sustainability and competitiveness goals through innovation in the European manufacturing sector.

[EIT Raw Materials](#) takes a perspective similar to the above, focusing on research and development of raw materials, harnessing the knowledge of SMEs and researchers.

[EIT Urban Mobility](#) mobilizes its private and public partners to develop solutions for smart, green and integrated transport across European cities.

## Partnerships as the key

To implement its innovation objectives, EIT counts with a budget of EUR 3,2 billion over the period of 2021 – 2027. This constitutes an increase of nearly a third, compared the previous Horizon funding period. The funding is distributed amongst the existing clusters, with the first program calls opening throughout the spring of 2021.

The key to implementing the EIT's ambitious goals are the continuing and new partnerships within its Innovation Communities, built on funding, capacity building and expertise sharing. This is the essence and the distinguishing feature of EIT compared to other components and institutes of Horizon's innovation pillar. Connecting small businesses, startups, NGOs, universities and research institutes is simultaneously part of EIT's its functioning logic and its ultimate goal. As a result of KIC's continuing initiatives, 60 innovation hubs have been established across Europe. Over 1700 organizations throughout Europe which have partnered with one of the KICs are bound to be joined by many others towards 2027.

## Objectives of the 2027 strategy

Launching two new Innovation and Knowledge Communities to mobilize even more partner organizations is part of the 2027 EIT Strategy. A new KIC focused on [Cultural and Creative Sectors and Industries](#) is set to be established in 2022. Another new KIC, which will likely focus on the area of Maritime development, research and innovation, is to be launched in 2025.

Among other [priorities](#) of the 2027 Strategy is an even stronger regional focus, compared to the previous period. EIT will develop regional outreach programs to boost the local potential of startups and research institutions, involving even greater number of companies, NGOs and cities in the initiatives led by its thematic KICs. The goal is to mobilize the benefits of KICs for the benefit of towns and regions, in line with Horizon's mission to strengthen local development, innovation and job creation.

Finally, EIT also aims to strengthen the innovation capacity of higher education by means of funding, expertise and capacity building. Programs and projects will be launched to help universities mobilize their existing knowledge and research capacities to foster innovation in their respective regions. The following piece of the [EUROPEUM](#)'s Horizon innovation series will discuss a current call for proposals which sets some ambitious goals in this respect.



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## About the series

This EUROPEUM series addresses the transformative momentum of Europe which is met by the beginning of the 2021-2027 Horizon funding cycle. The latter gives Europe a unique opportunity to address the societal and environmental challenges ahead.

This series of articles introduces some of the key components and programs of Horizon's innovation pillar. For this purpose, it discusses the trends, objectives and specific program calls, focusing predominantly on areas of private-public collaboration, capacity building and higher education.

[More about the series](#)

## About the author

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## About EUROPEUM

EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy is a non-profit, non-partisan, and independent think-tank focusing on European integration and cohesion. EUROPEUM contributes to democracy, security, stability, freedom, and solidarity across Europe as well as to active engagement of the Czech Republic in the European Union. EUROPEUM undertakes original research, organizes public events and educational activities, and formulates new ideas and recommendations to improve European and Czech policy making.

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