

# Report summarising synergies of EIC & EIT

**Report summarising existing tools/schemes at European/national/regional levels to support innovation eco-systems - possible practical case of synergies in regard to EIC, EIT Instruments**

*This report was produced under the framework of ACCESS2EIC, the official network for Horizon Europe National Contact Points (NCP) for the European Innovation Council (EIC). ACCESS2EIC's prime objective is to provide support and specialised services to NCPs and participants in the EIC.*

## Contents

Introduction .....	3
Introduction to EIC .....	4
Introduction to EIT .....	6
EIT & EIC Synergies .....	8
Results & Statistics .....	17
Case studies .....	19
Tips from NCPs .....	21
Conclusions .....	21

## Introduction

This guide has been written as part of the [Access2EIC](#) project, a Coordination and Support Action funded by the European Commission under Horizon Europe programme, with the aim to empower European Innovation Council and European Innovation Ecosystem National Contact Points (EIC and EIE NCPs) and facilitate cooperation among them to provide enhanced services across Europe. One of the objectives of the project is to understand synergies of the EIC with other European instruments, one of which is the EIT. This guide has been created with the aim to help NCPs supporting applicants to understand the whole spectrum of available programs dedicated to support startups and innovators.

The guidelines and advice provided in this document contain results and conclusions from the workshop organized for EIC and EIT NCPs by Access2EIC, which took place on 23rd October 2024. During the workshop EIC representatives shared the current statistics and results for EIC & EIT beneficiaries. EIT and KICs representatives presented information on currently available programs for startups, which may be considered as corresponding with the EIC, and their practical experience with implementation of the Fast-track scheme.

This guide is based on the information gathered from the EIC, EIT and KICs representatives and contains experience of Horizon Europe EIC & EIT NCPs that have the opportunity to interact with both instruments.

## Introduction to EIC

The European Innovation Council (EIC) is Europe's flagship innovation programme whose aim is to identify, develop and scale up deep tech breakthrough innovations. Established under the EU Horizon Europe with the budget of €10.1 billion, EIC's goal is to support game changing innovations throughout the lifecycle from early stage research (EIC Pathfinder), to proof of concept and technology transfer (EIC Transition), and the financing and scale up of start-ups and SMEs (EIC Accelerator). Responsible for the strategy and implementation of the EIC is the EIC Board, comprised of distinguished entrepreneurs, investors researchers, corporate people and other stakeholders of the innovation ecosystem. Every year, the EIC Work Programme is released from the EIC and SME Executive Agency (EISMEA), who is responsible for supporting the EIC Board and implementing EIC activities. The budget of €10.1 billion, EIC's goal is to support game changing innovations throughout the lifecycle from early- stage research (EIC Pathfinder), to proof of concept and technology transfer (EIC Transition), and the financing and scale up of start-ups and SMEs (EIC Accelerator). Responsible for the strategy and implementation of the EIC is the EIC Board, comprised of distinguished entrepreneurs, investors researchers, corporate people and other stakeholders of the innovation ecosystem. Every year, the EIC Work Programme is released by the EIC and SME Executive Agency (EISMEA), who is responsible for supporting the EIC Board and implementing EIC activities.

### EIC Pathfinder

The EIC Pathfinder instrument goes beyond conventional research funding by actively supporting visionary ideas that challenge established paradigms and open entirely new innovation avenues. It focuses on fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, bringing together experts from diverse fields to tackle complex problems that cannot be addressed by single disciplines alone. With both Open and Challenge-driven funding streams, the EIC Pathfinder allows researchers to propose groundbreaking ideas in any field or align with specific thematic challenges defined by the European Union. These challenges often focus on pressing issues such as health, sustainability, digital transformation, and energy transitions.

The instrument not only provides substantial financial support but also offers access to the network of experts, mentoring opportunities, and pathways to further funding through EIC Transition. By nurturing radical new concepts at their earliest stages (TRL 1-3), EIC Pathfinder aims to unlock scientific discoveries and translate them into transformative technologies with wide-ranging impacts on society and the economy. Ultimately, the EIC Pathfinder empowers researchers and innovators to take bold risks, fostering the creation of solutions that can redefine industries and contribute to Europe's leadership in global innovation.

## EIC Transition

EIC Transition not only provides funding but also serves as a strategic stepping stone for ambitious projects to progress beyond the laboratory (TRL 4-6). By focusing on innovations with high societal and economic impact, it enables researchers and innovators to address critical gaps in development, such as prototyping, validation, and demonstration of use cases. The program also emphasizes intellectual property (IP) management and market analysis to strengthen the commercial potential of the innovations it supports. Through a competitive selection process, the EIC Transition identifies projects with transformative potential and connects them with industry partners, investors, and other stakeholders. This approach helps foster an ecosystem of innovation, encouraging entrepreneurship and enabling Europe to lead in areas like green energy, digital technologies, health, and sustainability. Ultimately, the EIC Transition is a catalyst for turning cutting-edge science into impactful, market-ready solutions that can contribute to global progress.

## EIC Accelerator

The EIC Accelerator supports companies to scale up high impact innovations with the potential to create new markets or disrupt existing ones. The EIC Accelerator provides a unique combination of funding from EUR 0.5 to EUR 12.5 million and Business Acceleration Services. The EIC Accelerator focuses in particular on innovations, building on scientific discovery or technological breakthroughs ('deep tech') and where significant funding is needed over a long timeframe before returns can be generated. The EIC Accelerator supports the later stages of technology development as well as scale up. The technology component of the innovation must therefore have been tested and validated in a laboratory and other relevant environment (e.g. at Technology Readiness Level 5 needs to be finalized). EIC Accelerator provides funding through both grants and investments. The investments that can be either direct equity or quasi-equity investments are managed by the investment arm of the EIC, the EIC Fund.

## EIC STEP Scale Up

The EIC STEP Scale Up scheme is a component of the Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform (STEP), providing financial support through investments ranging from EUR 10 to 30 million to startups, SMEs, and small mid-caps.

The scheme aims to scale innovation in Europe's strategic technology sectors, such as digital and deep tech innovations, clean technologies and biotechnologies, in order to boost the EU's economic and technological competitiveness. By facilitating larger funding rounds, the EIC STEP Scale Up scheme will

enhance the impact of the initial investment and close the funding gap for high-risk innovations that are unable to secure full financing from other investors.

## Introduction to EIT

The European Institute for Innovation & Technology (EIT) is an independent EU organization that enhances Europe's innovation potential as a key component of Horizon Europe, the EU's funding programme for research and innovation from 2021 to 2027. By fostering sustainable growth and creating skilled jobs, the EIT improves Europe's ability to innovate and compete globally, while addressing pressing global challenges. The EIT Community, Europe's largest innovation ecosystem, provides an environment that accelerates innovation by connecting innovators, students, entrepreneurs, and relevant organizations in long-term pan-European partnerships. These partnerships, known as EIT Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs), focus on specific global challenges, ranging from digitalization to added-value manufacturing, health, raw materials, and urban mobility.

The EIT governance model operates on two levels. The EIT Governing Board (GB), made up of leaders from market, education and research, along with a representative of the European Commission, provides the overall strategic direction for the entire EIT Community. Under the guidance of the EIT Director, a central team at the EIT oversees and monitors the KICs, manages EU funding, and directs the EIT's education, innovation, and business creation strategy, as well as communicates the achievements and activities of the EIT Community.

The EIT integrates higher education as a crucial – and often missing – element of a comprehensive innovation strategy. By doing so, it promotes entrepreneurship within higher education as well as research and innovation (R&I) activities, supporting top-quality entrepreneurial education and skills development programs. The full range of EIT Community education initiatives is unified under the EIT Campus and its education and training activities, which aim to:

- Address disciplines that tackle key European socioeconomic challenges and broaden the EU's talent pool
- Promote the development of vital innovation, entrepreneurial, and leadership skills
- Encourage the mobility of researchers and students
- Foster knowledge-sharing, mentoring, and networking among participants.

The EIT Community's higher education partners focus on enhancing existing educational excellence to equip students, entrepreneurs, and business innovators with the knowledge, competencies, and skills needed for a knowledge-driven economy and a sustainable, digital, entrepreneurial society. These innovative programs are based on collaborations among various partners in the EIT KICs, including

higher education institutions, businesses, public bodies, NGOs, and research centres, who work together to offer cross-border and cross-sector mobility opportunities alongside hands-on innovation and entrepreneurship education.

## EIT Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs)

The EIT operates through nine (soon to be ten) Knowledge and Innovation Communities known as EIT KICs, each of them is dedicated to specific global challenges: EIT Climate-KIC, EIT InnoEnergy, EIT Digital, EIT Health, EIT Raw Materials, EIT Food, EIT Urban Mobility, EIT Manufacturing, EIT Culture and Creativity, and soon – EIT Water.

Each KIC develops its own strategy, business plan, and governance structure, using central EIT funding as seed capital to leverage existing investments and attract additional investors. Crucially, each EIT KIC creates innovation ecosystems through a range of activities aimed at addressing their specific societal challenges, while involving Europe's top players in education, research, and business. Through their business creation and acceleration programs, all EIT KICs provide a wide range of services designed to help entrepreneurs and innovators turn their ideas into successful, thriving businesses. These services cover areas such as technology support, market analysis, access to human resources, new markets and customers, mentoring, and seed and venture capital, facilitated by specific KIC innovation funds and investor networks. To enhance competitiveness and boost the international appeal of the European economy and its innovation capacity, the EIT and its KICs play a key role in attracting partner organizations, researchers, and students from across the globe, collaborating with non-EU entities.

An essential aspect of the KICs is achieving financial sustainability through results-driven innovation. In this regard, EIT KICs are tasked with developing and executing revenue-generating strategies that ensure their activities and partnerships continue beyond EIT funding. Each KIC is expected to become financially sustainable within 7 to 15 years after its designation. From the outset, each KIC must operate with a strong business mindset, transforming knowledge and resources into revenue. Financial sustainability means that after the initial EIT funding period, external private and public funding sources - such as returns on investments, revenue sharing, licensing, equity in startups, education commercialization, and service or consulting sales - will replace EIT support. This requires each KIC to define its unique selling proposition, identify financial assets, determine its value-add to the industry, and discover business opportunities that address societal challenges while ensuring financial sustainability in the medium term.

The first three KICs (EIT Digital, EIT InnoEnergy and EIT Climate-KIC) ended the partnership agreements with EIT in 2024, as the KIC should be financially sustainable after 15 years of EIT support. EIT signed a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) with these 3 KIC that will allow them to continue with activities such as education, training, RIS activities and dissemination of best practices. With this MoC these KICs

will continue to offer activities aligned with the EIT model. At the same time these KICs can continue to apply to the Cross-KIC opportunities such as Higher Education Initiative and EITJumpstarter. The MoC also stresses the importance of fostering synergies, coherence and complementarity between the first-wave KICs and the European Innovation Council. In this sense these KICs continue their support to startups and scaleups. You can find below the entrepreneurship opportunities these 3 KICs are still offering:

- Climate KIC - <https://www.climate-kic.org/programmes/climate-entrepreneurship/>
- EIT InnoEnergy - <https://www.innoenergy.com/for-innovators/>
- EIT Digital - <https://www.eitdigital.eu/digital-innovation-entrepreneurship/>

## EIT & EIC Synergies

The synergy between the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) and the European Innovation Council (EIC) represents a powerful collaboration aimed at fostering innovation and addressing Europe's most pressing challenges. While the EIT focuses on nurturing talent and building dynamic innovation ecosystems through its Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs), the EIC drives breakthrough technologies and supports market-creating innovations. Together, they can create a seamless pipeline that connects research, entrepreneurship, and commercialization, bridging gaps between idea generation, scaling, and market impact. By leveraging their complementary strengths, EIT and EIC synergies can accelerate the development of transformative solutions, strengthen Europe's competitiveness, and empower innovators to address social challenges such as sustainability, digital transformation, and health. This partnership exemplifies a united approach to foster innovation across sectors, ensure that Europe remains at the forefront of global advancements.

### Memorandum of understanding

EIT and EIC are both part of Horizon Europe Pillar 3 – Innovative Europe. In 2021, EIT and EIC signed a Memorandum of Understanding to foster synergies between both programmes during Horizon Europe.

The areas of cooperation are as follows:

- Support to innovative startups and SMEs
- Access to advisory services and networks
- Investments in innovative start-ups and SMEs
- Specific attention to women innovators



- Support for innovators from widening countries
- Transition from research results to innovation
- Market access for innovative startups and SMEs
- Sharing of data/ experience and reporting
- Identifying new opportunities for collaboration and synergies.

This MoU led to several concrete initiatives that are in place right now, such as Fast Track between EIT and EIC Accelerator, Business Acceleration Services for EIC beneficiaries, Women TechEU, a women leading deep tech startup companies from Europe and several prizes launched jointly by EIT and EIC.

### EIT & EIC innovation prizes

European Prize for Women Innovators celebrates the outstanding achievements of women entrepreneurs who have successfully brought innovative ideas to market. Organized by the European Innovation Council (EIC) and the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), the prize aims to highlight the critical role women play in driving innovation and to inspire more women to pursue entrepreneurial paths. The award recognizes trailblazing women from across Europe who have founded or co-founded companies that deliver groundbreaking solutions in fields such as technology, sustainability, health, and more. By showcasing their success stories, the prize not only promotes gender diversity in the innovation ecosystem but also addresses the gender gap in entrepreneurship. Winners receive financial awards and gain visibility as role models, encouraging a new generation of women innovators to contribute to Europe's economic growth and global leadership in innovation.

### EIC Business Acceleration Services (BAS)

EIT KICs can cooperate with the EIC as providers of Business Acceleration Services. BAS provides the EIC innovators wide access to a range of tailor-made high-quality business services, in order to help EIC portfolio companies in scaling up and commercialization of the EIC innovations.

Since 2023, EIT Manufacturing supported 2 EIC funded companies via BAS in access to market. Services offered by EIT Manufacturing covers:

- Support to Commercialisation including access to market, connections to partners and support on Go to Market Strategy
- Support to Investment: access to EIB Venture Debt, Investment Readiness Preparation, direct investment from the KIC and access to investors from the sector.

Starting from 2024, EIT Health is offering Market Access and Access to Finance support services through BAS. The range of services will include:

- **Access to Finance:** assistance with accessing funding opportunities, including preparation for investor pitches and connections to potential investors.
- **Market Discovery and Validation:** tailored analysis of healthcare landscapes, competitor insights, customer segmentation, and value proposition to meet specific market needs.
- **Regulatory and Reimbursement Strategy:** optimise reimbursement pathways, ensure regulatory compliance, and facilitate stakeholder engagement with local experts.

As this cooperation was established recently, no service has been delivered yet.

## EIC Scaling Club

The EIC Scaling Club is an exclusive community of 120+ European deep tech scale-ups and their partners. The 2-year program brings together high-potential deep tech companies focusing on major global challenges with investors, corporate innovators, and other industry stakeholders to spur growth. EIT KICs can participate in the Club as stakeholder members. Currently EIT Health is a member of the life science related cohorts, and EIT Manufacturing is a partner in the consortium in the cohort dedicated to manufacturing.

## EIC-EIT Fast-track scheme

The Fast-track scheme allows selected funding bodies managing other parts of the Horizon Europe and Horizon 2020 programmes to submit projects from their portfolio directly to the full application stage of the EIC Accelerator. EIT KICs can use this opportunity to accelerate the application process for their alumni's willing to apply to the EIC Accelerator and fulfilling the EIC's criteria. Therefore, using the Fast-track applicants do not apply directly to the EIC Accelerator call. Instead, they can apply by contacting dedicated KIC, which will decide whether the applicant is suitable for support under the EIC Accelerator. The project review run by KIC needs to use the same award criteria as for the 'short application stage' of the EIC Accelerator.

EIC established an annual limit of 20 companies which can be submitted to the EIC Accelerator by the Fast-track scheme from each EIT KIC. In October 2024, the most active KIC in this area was EIT Digital, which submitted 14 companies, then EIT Health with 9 companies submitted. EIT Climate-KIC, EIT Food, EIT Manufacturing and EIT Raw Materials submitted 3-4 companies. EIT Urban Mobility, EIT InnoEnergy and EIT Culture and Creativity did not submit any company via Fast-track.

At the end of 2024, the only KIC which was successful with their applicants to obtain the EIC Accelerator funding by using the Fast-track pathway was EIT Health with 4 successful companies.

For EIT Food and EIT Manufacturing, year 2024 was the first year of the implementation of the Fast-track scheme. First results are awaited in the following years.

After three years of running Fast-track in selected KICs, we can already see that there is a miss-match between the companies put forward by the KICs to the Fast-track, and the companies getting selected by the EIC. The reason for that may be the lack of common understanding of the EIC selection criteria and difficulties with identifying companies which might fit in within the EIC scheme.

To improve the success rate in future, EIT KICs can work closely with the EIC, including EIC Program Managers, to understand better the preferred profile of EIC target companies. According to the EIC, to make the Fast-track scheme more effective, it could use the publicity to raise awareness on local and national level, including support and guidance from the NCPs.


To better support this process, the EIT is working on an electronic data exchange system between EIT and EIC to make the common data available.

## EIT KICs programs supporting startups – experience shared by KICs

The EIT KICs programs that may be considered as specifically connected to the EIC are explained in the text below. The full catalogue of all EIT KICs business creation programs is available [HERE](#). The list of programs dedicated to startups by specific KICs is presented in the table below.

# EIT BUSINESS CREATION & ACCELERATION (\*CATALOGUE 2024)

EIT Climate-KIC	Climathon	EIT Health	Wildcard	EIT RawMaterials	Jumpstarter	
	ClimateLaunchpad		Bootcamps (some accept Seed)		Lab2Market	
	ClimAccelerator		Finance Booster		Booster Call	
EIT Digital	Deep Hack		DIGInnovation	EIT Urban Mobility	Open Innovation Services	
	Open Innovation Factory		Catapult		European Raw Materials Alliance	
	Venture Programme		InnoStars Awards		Strategic Investments	
	Equity Portfolio		Investor Network		Growth Lab	
	EIT Digital Champions		Innovators		Mobility Corporate Venture Builder	
EIT Food	Growth Services		EIT InnoEnergy	Venture Building Accelerate	EIT Community	Market Readiness Accelerators
	EIC Accelerator Fast Track					Transform
	Food Impact Fund	EIT Manufacturing	Access2Tech	Scale-Up Programme		
	EIT Food Seedbed Incubator			Jumpstarter		
	Empowering Women in AgriFood			Supernovas		
	Sales Booster			Connect & Experience		
	EIT Food Accelerator Network			Calling2Scale		
RisingFoodStars						
Corporate Venturing Services						



European Institute of Innovation & Technology

A body of the European Union

Figure 1- 2024 CATALOGUE OF EIT KICS BUSINESS CREATION (BC) PROGRAMMES

Below we present information on experience with the Fast-track mechanism as well as challenges with EIT – EIC synergies collected from EIT KICs representatives.

## EIT Health

EIT Health runs various programmes which offer the opportunity to learn new skills, connect with a network of experts, access new markets, get financing and more. There is also a wide range of programs dedicated to startups and innovators.

EIT Health has the Fast-track scheme active since 2022 and this is the only KIC which has successful companies that managed to become financed by EIC Accelerator. EIT Health Fast-track is dedicated to companies that signed a participant's agreement in one of KIC's Business Creation programs.

EIT Health support for startups within Fast-track includes the following activities:

- Two Mentoring Days (workshops) with multiple experts providing webinars on four different topics (EIC Application, IP and Innovation Strategy, EIC Commercialization Strategy & Business Development, EIC Finance - what to expect),
- Webinars held by experts who have been supporting start-ups in preparing EIC Accelerator application and preparation process / dedicated post-presentation support,
- One to one coaching with experts through the Mentoring and Coaching Network, self-selection of available coaches, many specific EIC experts,
- Peer Session by previous successful EIC Accelerator applicants- to share best practices, tips and coping skills.

EIT Health also offers remote evaluation of eligibility, including EIC Accelerator criteria, and check-ins with EIT Health staff to assess readiness for Step 2. EIT Health companies which have been fast-tracked successfully to the EIC Accelerator are as follows:

- **ARTHex Botech:** alumni of HeadStart 2020, Catapult 2021
- **MiMark:** alumni of Bootcamp 2018, Wildcard 2020, Catapult 2022, Bootcamp Women Entrepreneurship 2023
- **Stil:** alumni of Bootcamp 2017, HeadStart 2017, Investor Network 2019, Catapult 2020
- **Brenus PHARMA:** alumni of MCN 2023.

## EIT Manufacturing

EIT Manufacturing Fast-track to EIC Accelerator has been implemented in 2024. For the October's cut-off there were 3 companies sent to the EIC, and 8+ are foreseen in 2025. Companies from 2024 are still in the process of evaluation on the EIC's side, results are expected in February 2025.

The Fast-track scheme in EIT Manufacturing works with no open call. The access to EIC Accelerator is open to all companies from the KIC's portfolio. All the eligible companies come from the constantly growing pool of startups invested by EIT Manufacturing before. The selection process is very similar to EIT Manufacturing its own Investment Call, called Accelerate. The process covers eligibility check and due diligence, which is evaluated by external experts, involving VCs.

Companies taking part in the Fast-track can benefit from additional external evaluation covering EIC Accelerator criteria. During the program companies are mentored by the KIC's staff and external experts. Mentoring includes EIC Accelerator specific requirements and support on both steps (Step 2 and the Interview). The whole process takes about four months and is very intense. At the end of the program companies should be well prepared for any investment, not only stemming from EIC.

EIT Manufacturing program which may be considered as the one with the best chances for synergies with EIC is called EIT Manufacturing Accelerate. This program works as a permanently open call, with the objective to support, scale and accelerate industry startups into impactful players in the European manufacturing ecosystem.

The Accelerate programme supports and grants financing to startups and scaleups with innovative solutions and technologies, that address critical challenges in the manufacturing sector and are helping the European manufacturing sector to become more efficient, resilient, green, and globally competitive.

Tailored internationalization and financing support services are provided to startups and scaleups from across Europe to support their product development and go-to-market capabilities.

## EIT Food

EIT Food implemented Fast-track in 2024. The program is based on an internal call, which is only open to alumni of three core Business Creation programmes: Seedbed, EIT Food Acceleration Network and Rising Food Stars.

In 2024, EIT food fast-tracked 3 companies and the following 4 will be fast-tracked in 2025. The Fast-track program offered additional support, which was based on cooperation with experienced consultants, who provided full proposal applications reviews.

It is also worth to note that in 2023 there were 4 companies from the EIT Food ecosystem which successfully applied for the EIC and received funding.

EIT Food program eligible for Fast-track:

The Seedbed Incubator is a 6-month equity-free programme, which identifies and validates the commercial potential of Europe's most promising IP-backed innovations, to launch sustainable and

scalable Agrifood Tech ventures across Europe. This program is dedicated to aspiring entrepreneurs and researchers looking for market-validated business propositions.

EIT Food Accelerator Network is a 2-3 month, theme-based programme, delivered in a hybrid mode through six unique innovation Hubs in Europe. The programme enables the most promising agrifoodtech startups to accelerate, further validate their technology and advance their investment and commercial readiness to achieve the ultimate goal: a successful market adoption.

RisingFoodStars program identifies the most promising aspiring Agrifood and FoodTech scale-ups and boosts their chances of business success. EIT Food experts accompany in the scaling journey, all the way from mission crystallisation and communication, definition and implementation of strategic priorities, investment and Go-To-Market readiness, leadership skills upgrade, access to the right partners, and more.

## EIT Digital

EIT Digital Fast Track programme is actively working. It is open to EIT Digital companies that have participated in any EIT Digital programme before, have not previously applied to the EIC Accelerator programme in the past 365 days, have not previously applied to the EIC - EIT Digital Fast Track programme. At the same time these companies need to be SMEs according to the EU definition, own or have rights to the IP that form the basis of the project or product and are already incorporated and operating in a Horizon Europe Member States and Associated Countries. The EIT Digital program which can be considered as the most relevant before using Fast-track is Venture Building Program.

## EIT Climate-KIC

EIT Climate-KIC Fast-track supported 22 companies in the past years, with no successful outcomes to date. However, Climate-KIC alumni start-ups have been relatively successful outside the fast-track scheme, with 32 companies successful via direct application.

A review of the fast-track scheme in 2024 identified founder feedback that the timing and criteria of the EIC Accelerator are difficult to manage for the relatively early-stage companies that are supported in the Climate-KIC ClimAccelerator and offered the Fast-track. We note that most successful companies appoint a dedicated bid writing consultancy to handle the complex application process for them. Climate-KIC will continue to provide Fast-track support to companies in 2025, with a modified selection process and additional guidance material to founders going forward to improve the outcomes of the scheme.

Outside the Fast-track program, Climate-KIC provides support to a large number of climate tech companies at early stages that go on to secure EIC Accelerator support. The 32 successful examples

show the positive relationship between providing early-stage ideation to founders who then develop their businesses for a few years before reaching the maturity required to join the EIC Accelerator programme.

### EIT InnoEnergy

EIT InnoEnergy decided to pause the Fast-track scheme after one year of trial period. InnoEnergy, as an active investor, has invested in 200+ climate-tech companies, and there is an average number of 10-15 companies applying for EIC Accelerator each year. After the first year of running Fast-track, InnoEnergy team concluded that the scheme in its current design does not bring sufficient value and benefits to the companies to outweigh its downsides. Currently InnoEnergy portfolio companies interested in applying to the EIC Accelerator do that on a regular basis, with a success rate similar to average.

InnoEnergy has invested in one company which originated from a pilot action with EIC, i.e. after having received EIC Accelerator investment. While this reverse deal flow is not expected to become mainstream, it worked for the company *Ligneasy* and this case shows that companies can also benefit from the European ecosystem this way.

### EIT Urban Mobility

EIT Urban Mobility considers EIC criteria difficult to connect with EIT Urban Mobility's scope. As the EIC is mainly focused on deep tech life sciences solutions, companies using EIT Urban Mobility's programs rarely respond to those criteria. The KIC also notes that the Fast-track scheme has not proven to be agile or effective for the efforts invested on the KIC's side.

### EIT Raw Materials

EIT Raw Materials implemented the Fast Track to EIC scheme in 2022. In 2024, EIT Raw Materials submitted two fast track applications from supported companies: Powall (Netherlands) and E-Magy (Netherlands). Both cases have received support from EIT Raw Materials' Business Creation and Support program (Booster) before. For the Fast Track scheme, the companies were encouraged to provide a short proposal following the criteria equivalent to EIC Accelerator Stage 1. We organised an evaluation panel for the pitching including external and internal experts in the field. Based on the assessment of the startup pitch, we submitted the validation report to the EIC.



The Fast-track is open all year to all startups previously supported by EIT Raw Materials Business Creation programs, without an open call. The selection process is similar to the EIT Raw Materials Booster program and includes eligibility checks and evaluations by internal and external experts.

The fast-tracked companies get tailored advice on EIC Accelerator requirements, including guidance on the process.

It is worth to notice that EIT RM supported companies have applied directly to the EIC Accelerator on a regular basis, with a low to average success rate. However, the fast-tracked companies have not yet been successful with EIC Accelerator, which raises the question on the impact of the Fast track service. To improve outcomes in future, we aim to actively scout for the right startups fulfilling the challenges with regard to the EIC's Work Program.

EIT Raw Materials Booster program supports startups and scaleups with innovative solutions in raw materials. It offers funding, mentoring, and services to help them address industry challenges and contribute to securing the supply of critical raw materials to European industry.

## EIT Culture & Creativity

EIT Culture and Creativity does not provide support to start ups yet. A first call on an online accelerator programme in autumn 2024 for SMEs and scaleups in the Cultural and Creative Sectors and Industries (CCSI), focusing on fashion, architecture, cultural heritage, audiovisual media, and games was issued and the selected companies will benefit from an 8-week agenda of lectures, workshops, and group mentoring sessions led by top European speakers and industry experts. These activities provided participants with the tools, strategies, and connections needed to drive innovation and scale their businesses in the creative industries.

## Jumpstarter and Post-Jumpstarter *(dedicated to [Regional Innovation Scheme countries](#) only)*

EIT Jumpstarter is a pre-accelerator focusing on converting innovative ideas into start-ups within a 7-month-long program. It focuses on deep technology and science-based teams where at least one co-founder comes from the moderate or modest innovator country (EIT Regional Innovation Scheme-eligible countries and territories). The alumni of the programme can continue their free-of-charge mentoring and matchmaking within the EIT Post-Jumpstarter module.

EIT Post-Jumpstarter is a programme where founders get practical guidance regarding internationalisation and sales strategies from global investors and help in getting additional traction on the market. The first edition accepted seven start-ups, but from 2025 there will be 16 spots available for start-ups which graduated from the EIT Jumpstarter and other selected EIT KIC programmes.

If strengthened, EIT Jumpstarter can act as a feeder programme for the EIC by providing early-stage start-ups with the groundwork needed to apply for more advanced EIC funding opportunities. A start-up



that successfully completes the EIT Jumpstarter and EIT Post-Jumpstarter may be in a stronger position to apply for EIC Accelerator grants; however, more EIC-focused training modules (possibly run by the EIC experts) could be potentially included in the EIT Post-Jumpstarter curriculum.

During the previous edition of the EIT Post-Jumpstarter, selected teams were contacted with EIC NCPs to present them additional opportunities within the EIC. This activity could be strengthened in the future as not in every country this support was available.

## Results & Statistics

Between the years 2021 and 2023, there were 88 companies submitted to the Fast-track scheme by all the EIT KICs as well as other eligible instruments.

According to the *EIC Accelerator Submissions – NCP dashboard* (Figure 2) there have been 63 proposals submitted from the EIT KICs on December 2024 using the Fast-track scheme, and about 40% of them have been invited to the next step – EIC Jury Panel.

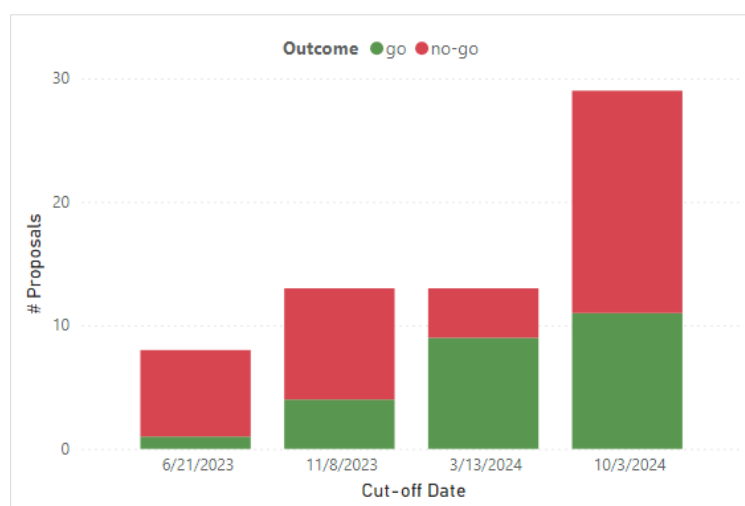


Figure 3 - EIC Accelerator Submissions – NCP; 12.12.2024

According to the EIC the Fast-track scheme performs similarly to the Plug-in, which is a similar instrument dedicated to proposals stemming from existing national or regional programmes that have been assessed and certified. During 2021 – 2023 there were 121 companies, which have been submitted to the EIC Accelerator from the Plug-in.

The most active KICs in the Fast-track scheme area are EIT Health and EIT Digital. Specific numbers of the companies submitted by the EIT-EIC Fast-track according to the thematic scope can be found in Figure 4 below.

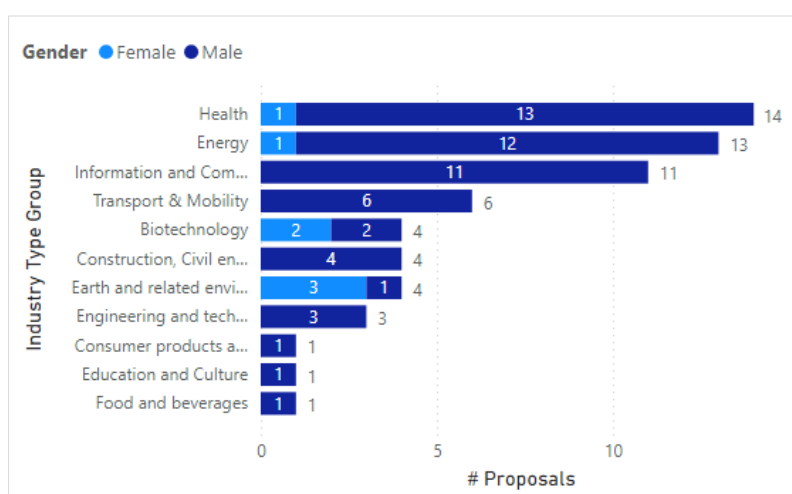


Figure 5 - EIC Accelerator Submissions – NCP, 12.12.2024

So far, 4 companies out of the ones submitted by the EIT KICs using the Fast-track scheme have been founded by the EIC Accelerator. Those are companies coming from: Spain (2), Portugal (1) and the Netherlands (1). All of them come from EIT Health.

It is also worth to note, that for EIT Food and EIT Manufacturing the year 2024 was the first year of the implementation of the Fast track scheme within the KIC. We can expect results in the following years.

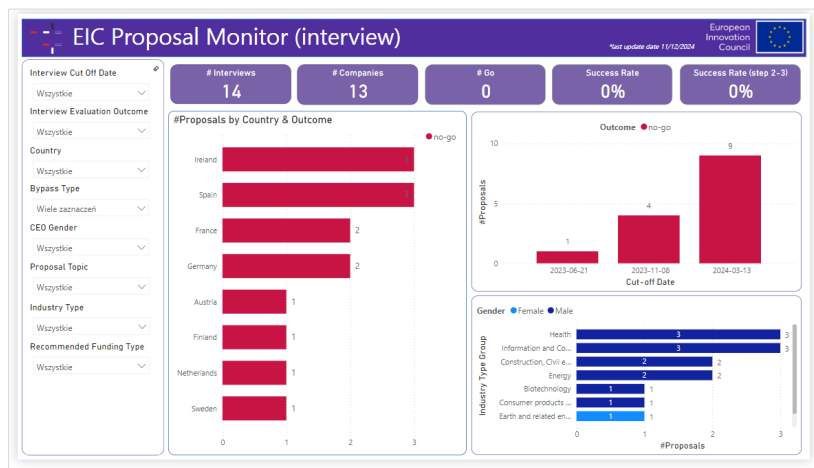


Figure 6 - EIC Accelerator Submissions – NCP, 12.12.2024

As the final success rate is very low, it is worth to note that 15-20 % of companies getting to step 2 of EIC Accelerator are coming from the EIT ecosystem (through fast-track scheme or direct application).

## Case studies

- **MiMARK - EIT Health company fast-tracked and successful in EIC Accelerator in 2023**

MiMARK is a Spanish company revolutionizing gynecological cancer care by improving the accuracy, efficiency and comfort of endometrial cancer diagnosis. The startup is a winner of the 2020 Wildcard Programme. In June 2022, MiMARK reached the semi-finals of the EIT Health Catapult 2022-23, a competition showcasing Europe's most promising biotech, medtech, and digital health start-ups to leading experts and investors. In 2022 the company was part of the EIT Health Fast Track Programme and succeeded in EIC Accelerator in 2023.

- **MagREESource – EIT RawMaterials company Fast-tracked to EIC in 2023**

MagREESource is a French company that developed a full process for the recycling and manufacturing of magnets. The company was supported by EIT Raw Materials in 2020 Booster program. It has now developed and setup a pilot plant in the region of Grenoble able to process up to 50T of magnets to be recycled. The company has already sales and is looking for the next industrialisation step allowing the production of 500-1000T of magnets.

Societal/market impact: Without Rare Earth mines in Europe, MagReesource circular model (recycling magnet scraps to make new magnets) is a key asset for ensuring sovereignty and sustainability.

The company validated the go-to-market for magnets from 100% recycled materials. The improvement in the production process will allow a more efficient and resilient industrialization, allowing an acceleration of the number of tests in a short period.

EIT support: EIT Raw Materials has supported MagREESource via its Booster programme and is part of the shareholders since 2022. Since then, the valorisation of the company has increased thanks to the building of the first pilot plant that has a capacity to produce 50T of recycled magnets. The company has raised the next round of funding in 2025 for the industrialization (500-1000T) that will increase further the value of shares.

- **Sensoneo – company supported by EIT Digital Venture Acceleration Programme and funded by EIC Accelerator in 2020**

Sensoneo is a pioneering provider of smart waste management solutions headquartered in Slovakia. The company is working on a cost-efficient enterprise-grade SaaS solutions that manage end-to-end waste lifecycles, foster traceability, and contribute to the circular economy. After graduating from EIT Digital Venture Acceleration Programme, Sensoneo received EIC Accelerator grant of EUR 1,368M and an investment opportunity of EUR 3M from the EIC Fund. In 2023, it announced the successful attainment of EUR 6.2M in series A funding with international investors.

- **Elonroad – company from the EIT Urban Mobility's equity portfolio, EIC Accelerator beneficiary in 2023**

Elonroad is Swedish start-up developing a 100% automated electric road system auto charging for all types of electric vehicles when parked as well as when driving. This solution is an enabler for the electrification of vehicles, comparable to what fiber has been for digitalization. The company is testing their solution in a 2.5km motorway trail in Paris and, if successful, plans to build up to 4 000m by 2030. Elonroad has clients such as APM Terminals (Denmark), the Municipality of Lund (Sweden), and AISIN (Belgium), among others. In 2021, Elonroad completed a funding round totaling SEK 22M (USD 2.6M).

- **WIDMO Cities – company supported by EIT Raw Materials Booster programme, EIC Accelerator beneficiary in 2023**

WIDMO Cities is Polish startup non-invasive solution for the cities and companies within the construction sector. The company works on providing access to very high-precision subterranean information on geology, utilities, and underground infrastructure. WIDMO Cities develops technology that allows for rapid gathering and processing of the described information giving any stakeholder

incredibly easy access to the needed data. Obtained information significantly decreases the risk and cost of construction and alleviates safety hazards associated with geological faults. Before the EIC Accelerator, WIDMO Cities attended EIT RawMaterials Booster programme which allowed them to develop 3d modeling simulations used for acceleration of development and deployment of fully functional modelling software.

- **Solmeya – company supported by EIT Food, EIC Accelerator beneficiary in 2024**

Solmeya is a Greek purpose-driven Agri - BioTech venture producing more efficiently “carbon neutral” high value bioingredient-based proteins, through vertical microalgae cultivation & harvesting (utilizing the freely available CO<sub>2</sub> & sunlight), enabling the food, feed & pharma industries manufacture high value algal based premium end products for a significant lower cost with a phenomenal lower carbon footprint, abiding by the circular economy’s morals and goals. Before the EIC Accelerator, Solmeya was a beneficiary of the 2020 EIT Climate KIC Accelerator Greece and the 2021 EIT Food Acceleration Network.

## Tips from NCPs

### Tips for EIT KICs & EIT beneficiaries applying to EIC

1. NCP's role is to guide candidates through HE programs according to their needs and maturity. Companies can contact their local NCPs for support. EIC NCPs will respond to the questions and can consult EIC proposals at any stage, from short proposal stage to preparation for interviews. The list of NCPs for each country is available online: [HERE](#)
2. EIC Accelerator full proposal forms are available on the EIC website: [HERE](#)
3. The Access2EIC (A2EIC) project provides additional support materials to facilitate the application process, such as annotated templates and other guidance documents. These resources are available on the project's official website: [HERE](#).

## Conclusions

1. **Enhancing synergies between EIC and EIT requires mutual cooperation:**

- a. EIT KICs should deepen their understanding of the EIC's vision of a successful company to better assess its criteria at each stage. Fast-track programs should be aligned with EIC requirements, incorporating dedicated support for companies.
- b. Fast-track programs could be tailored to address annual EIC Challenges, considering the crucial role of EIC Program Managers in shaping the EIC portfolio.
- c. The EIC should acknowledge that the current Fast-track mechanism does not always serve companies optimally. EIT KICs are open to collaboration in redesigning a more synergistic and beneficial pathway for EIT alumni.

## **2. Need for improving data sharing and transparency:**

Data exchange between EIC and EIT should be enhanced to ensure transparency and coherence across all programs. Statistics and relevant insights provided to Member States should be up-to-date and possible to analyse.

## **3. Strengthening integration with national and regional ecosystems:**

Better alignment of EIC and EIT instruments with local support programs is needed, ensuring their effective incorporation into national innovation ecosystems. This is important especially in widening countries where connections between different instruments should be clear. Strong synergies should be enforced in order to advance the local ecosystems.

## **4. Promoting gender diversity:**

Gender equality is a fundamental principle of both the EIC and the EIT. Since there is still a gap between the entrepreneurial success of male and female innovators, initiatives like Women Innovators Prize should be continued. Winners of the prize should be supported and promoted during events to showcase best practices. They should also be actively encouraged to participate in the financial instruments of EIC and EIT.

## **5. Enhancement of EU industrial competitiveness:**

According to the new Strategic Technologies Platform, the focus of the European Research Area are specific key technologies that will decrease EU's dependency and stabilize its market. It is also reflected by the recent establishment of the EIC STEP financial instrument. It confirms a very clear path the EU wants to follow. Thus, NCPs from both EIT and EIC communities shall promote the European agenda and, while aware of the challenges EU faces, enhance the innovation potential in strategic technologies.

**ACCESS2EIC** is an 84-months coordination and support action aimed to empower and facilitate transnational cooperation within the network of National Contact Points – NCPs focused on the Horizon Europe European Innovation Council – EIC and the European Innovation Ecosystems - EIE. It involves a consortium made of formally appointed NCPs.

ACCESS2EIC comprise a network of 16 partners:

1. AGENZIA PER LA PROMOZIONE DELLA RICERCA EUROPEA (APRE), Italy
2. CENTRO PARA EL DESARROLLO TECNOLOGICO INDUSTRIAL (CDTI), Spain
3. OSTERREICHISCHE FORSCHUNGSFORDERUNGSGESELLSCHAFT MBH (FFG), Austria
4. INSTYTUT PODSTAWOWYCH PROBLEMOW TECHNIKI POLSKIEJ AKADEMII NAUK (IPPT PAN), Poland
5. NATIONAL TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION AUTHORITY (IIA), Israel
6. DEUTSCHES ZENTRUM FUER LUFT – UND RAUMFAHRT EV (DLR), Germany
7. INNOVASJON NORGE (IN), Norway
8. BPIFRANCE FINANCEMENT SA (BPIFRANCE), France
9. IDRYMA TECHNOLOGIAS KAI EREVNAS (FORTH), Greece
10. ENTERPRISE IRELAND (EI), Ireland
11. ANI – AGENCIA NACIONAL DE INOVACAO, SA (ANI), Portugal
12. GIS-TRANSFERCENTER FOUNDATION (GIS-TC), Bulgaria
13. CENTRUM VEDECKO TECHNICKYCH INFORMACII SLOVENSKEJ REPUBLIKY (CVTISR), Slovakia
14. NEMZETI KUTATASI FEJLESZTESI ES INNOVACIOS HIVATAL (NKFIH), Hungary
15. TECHNOLOGICKE CENTRUM AKADEMIE VED CESKE REPUBLIKY (TC CAS), Czechia
16. MINISTÈRE DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPÉRIEUR, DE LA RECHERCHE ET DE L'INNOVATION (MESRI), France



# Access2EIC

National Contact Points for Innovation



[www.access2EIC.eu](http://www.access2EIC.eu)