

# EIT Western Balkan HEI Capacity Building on Circular Economy program – Call for applications 2021.

*Terms and Conditions*

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## 1. Overview of the organizing Knowledge and Innovation Communities

The European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) is an independent EU body that is boosting Europe's ability to innovate. The EIT nurtures entrepreneurial talent and supports new ideas, bringing together the “knowledge triangle” of leading companies, universities and research centres to form dynamic cross-border partnerships called Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs). Currently, there are eight thematic KICs: EIT Food, Climate-KIC, EIT Digital, EIT InnoEnergy, EIT Health, EIT RawMaterials, EIT Manufacturing and EIT Urban Mobility. ***The following KICs are participating*** in the EIT Western Balkans HEI Capacity Building on Circular Economy program (KICs): ***EIT Food, EIT RawMaterials, EIT Digital and EIT Climate KIC.***

The EIT Regional Innovation Scheme (EIT RIS) is the EIT Community's outreach scheme with the objective to contribute to boosting innovation in European countries and regions that belong to the groups of ‘modest and moderate’ innovators (according to the European Innovation Scoreboard). The Cross-KIC Western Balkans project has the objective to strengthen and establish EIT presence and outreach in the Western Balkans region (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Republic of North Macedonia, Serbia), further developing collaboration between the KICs, based on previous experiences, results and acquired knowledge of the cross-KIC collaboration in earlier years while working on Circular Economy. All participating KICs are part of this project and finance activities from this budget.

### Overview of EIT RawMaterials

Minerals, metals and advanced materials are key enablers to achieve the objectives of the European Green Deal. Today, only a fraction of the most relevant raw materials is produced in Europe. This can be changed through a circular economy approach, through innovation in recycling, substitution, processing, mining, and exploration. It is the objective of EIT RawMaterials to secure a sustainable raw materials supply by driving innovation, education, and entrepreneurship across European industrial ecosystems.

EIT RawMaterials provides a collaborative environment for disruptive and breakthrough innovations by connecting business with academia, research, and investment. It also invests in future generation of innovators for the raw materials sector through initiatives ranging from education of school students to higher qualifications for industry professionals.

### Overview of EIT Food

EIT Food is a pan-European partnership, with a consumer-centred approach, to empower innovators, entrepreneurs and students to develop world-class solutions to societal challenges, accelerate innovation, create jobs and increase Europe's competitiveness. As one of the largest food-related initiatives worldwide, EIT Food wants Europe to lead a global revolution in food innovation and production. Our ambition is to redesign the way our food is produced, delivered, consumed and recycled

and to create a future-proof and effective food sector that supports a sustainable and circular bioeconomy.

## Overview of EIT Digital

EIT Digital embodies the future of innovation by mobilizing a pan-European multi-stakeholder open-innovation ecosystem of top European corporations, SMEs, start-ups, universities and research institutes, where students, researchers, engineers, business developers and investors address the technology, talent, skills, business and capital needs of digital entrepreneurship. EIT Digital builds the next generation of digital ventures, digital products and services, and breed digital entrepreneurial talent, helping business and entrepreneurs to be at the frontier of digital innovation by providing them with technology, talent, and growth support.

EIT Digital answers specific innovation needs by, for example, finding the right partners to bring technology to the market, supporting the scale-up of digital technology ventures, attracting talent and developing their digital knowledge and skills.

## Overview of EIT Climate-KIC

EIT Climate-KIC is a Knowledge and Innovation Community, working to accelerate the transition to a zero-carbon, climate-resilient society. Supported by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology, EIT Climate-KIC identifies and support innovation that helps society mitigate and adapt to climate change. We believe that a decarbonised, sustainable economy is not only necessary to prevent catastrophic climate change but presents a wealth of opportunities for business and society.

## 2. Background

The **circular economy** concept is of crucial importance to post-COVID recovery. Countries of Western Balkans are working to improve waste management approaches and could benefit from the circular economy approaches, which consider the systemic interdependencies and go beyond the tendency to look merely at recycling rates. Circular economy is also a pivotal tool for delivering part of the 2050 decarbonisation agenda in Europe. EIT Food has joined forces with EIT Climate-KIC, EIT RawMaterials, EIT Health, EIT Manufacturing, EIT Digital and EIT Urban Mobility in a joint initiative aimed at bolstering collaboration and enhancing the circular economy approach in the region. Together, they will be exploring their learnings around a green and circular economy as an umbrella approach to boost the economy in a post-COVID world, but also enhance capacities and foster knowledge-sharing in the Western Balkans. Citizens, through their daily choices, make the foundation of a circular economy. For the above-mentioned reasons the EIT community has launched the ***X-KIC Circular Economy in the Western Balkans*** project with the specific objectives of:

- Support decision-makers and authorities in designing circular economy strategies and plans in a coordinated cross-regional approach.
- Build capacities of **Higher Education Institutions (HEI)** to offer innovative and entrepreneurial activities to strengthen and make more attractive their offer, which will connect them to the HEI initiative.
- Further open and expand participation in KICs activities from the Western Balkans, through scholarships to join other RIS activities in each KIC.
- Train young people locally in entrepreneurship (to give opportunities in the countries) and enable their participation in European programmes.

- Strengthen KTI approach in the EIT RIS regions, evaluate lessons learned and transfer best practices gained on the ground in neighbourhood regions.
- Create space for green jobs and accelerating the contribution of innovations to resolving societal challenges and developing new business opportunities, around the New Green Deal.

In parallel, the EIT has launched the '*HEI Initiative: Innovation Capacity Building for Higher Education program*' which has been designed to increase the innovation and entrepreneurial capacity in higher education, bringing together HEIs in innovation value chains and ecosystems across Europe. **HEIs are encouraged to prepare proposals that will support the development and implementation of six Actions in their institutions, cumulatively leading to transformation and an increase in entrepreneurial and innovation capacity.** The EIT Strategic Innovation Agenda 2021-2027 sets out that most of the funding under the EIT Higher Education Initiative will go to HEIs which are not currently partners of the EIT KICs, the EIT Higher Education Initiative will unite EIT KIC partners and non-partners to cultivate collaborative relationships and leverage the existing innovation and entrepreneurial knowledge base developed within EIT KICs thus far. **One of the objectives of this call is to provide support and the necessary tools for not yet EIT member HEIs from the Western Balkans region to successfully apply and participate in the EIT Higher Education Initiative program** using Circular Economy as a topic of strategic importance for both the region and the EU to be a thematic vehicle.

By this call, the EIT Western Balkans HEI Capacity Building on Circular Economy program invites non-EIT member HEIs from the Western Balkans region (eligible countries are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia) that have a specific connection through education and/or research to Circular Economy and towards any of the fields indicated at the involved KICs introduction to applying and participate within the program.

The capacity-building program will provide training on the HEInnovate toolbox. **HEInnovate is a self-assessment tool for Higher Education Institutions that wish to explore their innovation potential.** It guides you through a process of identification, prioritization and action planning in eight key areas. HEInnovate also helps to diagnose areas of strength and weakness, opens discussion and debate on the entrepreneurial/innovative nature of any particular HEI and allows users to compare and contrast evolution over time. **It is also the basis of the Innovation Vision Action Plan (IVAP) that is required by the EIT Higher Education Initiative application, therefore participating in this training activity could prepare you to envision your innovation pathway and create quality applications to HEI Initiative.**

The HEInnovate training is run by an experienced HEInnovate facilitator and offers the possibility of international networking with like-minded people and learning through sharing experience and best practices. Participation is free of charge for delegates of selected universities and provides an opportunity to develop your action plan to improve **University-Business Cooperation (UBC)** practice. Those HEIs developing a meaningful and relevant action plan in the process might be selected to further involved education and capacity building activities delivered by the KICs to support HEIs reaching their objectives through implementing their action plans.

### 3. How is the program structured?

The program is structured into different phases.

**Phase 1** is the application phase where HEIs have to submit their application until the deadline to the cross-KIC team in a defined way elaborating on the fulfilment of eligibility criteria and providing information on the defined assessment criteria provided in the respective chapter of this document.

Eligible HEIs selected by the involved KICs based on the information provided in the application are invited to **Phase 2** – where a 3-day active, participatory workshop is organized online about the background and the use of the HEInnovate self-assessment tool.

## Learning Objectives of the planned training

### **Completing the training programme participants will have a deeper insight into and understanding of**

- the major challenges of HEIs in the 21st century,
- the opportunities provided by the entrepreneurial university model,
- who the stakeholders of university business co-operations are,
- the main objectives, expectations of these stakeholders,
  - potential SMART indicators that can help diagnostic efforts, set targets and measure progress against these targets.

### **Completing the training programme participants will be able to**

- run situation analysis supported by quantitative and qualitative indicators,
- take part in policy-making process targeting UBC,
  - mapping the university's knowledge base and the competence of its academic and administrative staff,
  - maintaining an inventory of the existing research results,
  - creating an inventory of services the HEI can provide to businesses ,
  - recording the existing and the potential corporate partners,
  - screening their needs,
  - operating technology transfer or other interface services that can help promote:
- dialogue and cooperation between the HEI and its business partners
- set up the steering and monitoring structures and processes controlling strategic progress in UBC

### **Completing the course participants will be more open towards UBC policies and developing**

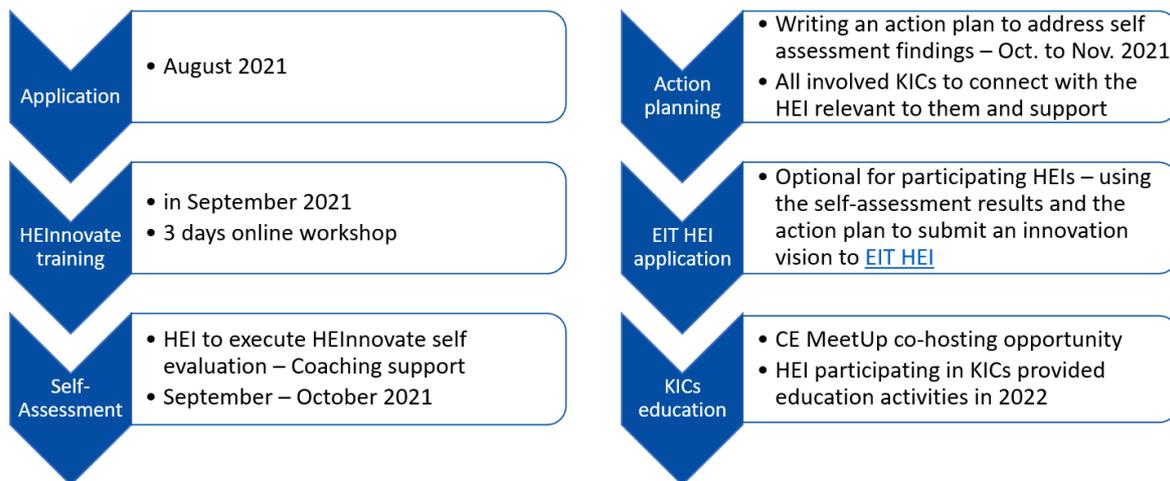
- entrepreneurial mindset,
- competencies and projects that serve UBC,
- will be aware of the importance of measurement opportunities and the use of indicators.

All participating HEI are expected to carry out the self-assessment as part of **Phase 3** and define its objective how to become an active member of the regional ecosystem in any aspects of Circular Economy and define the action plan to achieve this goal including the offered support by a relevant KIC. HEIs, drafting an action plan considered to be impactful, relevant, and realistic, will be selected and invited to continue in 2022 by having the opportunity to enrol HEI staff into KIC provided education and capacity building activity as part of **Phase 4** on the field of entrepreneurship, university-business cooperation and circular economy. The concrete inventory of programmes offered is to be determined by the KICs based on the HEIs and their action plan selected.

## Additional opportunity

The KICs would like to provide an opportunity to the best two applicants (HEIs) to co-host a Circular Economy thematised MeetUP events with the KICs, within the country where the HEI is located. An online event where the KICs providing technical and organisational support, international experts and speakers and translation service for a one-day event, a thematised MeetUp aims to support raising awareness of the Circular Economy idea and its practices, promoting and showcasing best practices and

foster dialogue between stakeholders that have an equal interest in Circular Economy and its future development in the region. **What is a MeetUp?** A Meetup is an informal gathering hosted either in-person and/or virtually for people with similar interests. In this case, we would like to popularize the concept of Circular Economy and organise an informal event where we can openly discuss interesting topics, challenges and future opportunities on Circular Economy and how it is related to the region.



## 4. Who can participate?

The application is open to all non-EIT member<sup>1</sup> HEIs from the Western Balkans region (eligible countries are: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia) that have a specific connection through education and/or research to Circular Economy (and towards any of the fields indicated at the involved KICs introduction above) to apply and participate within the program. Eligible HEIs are willing and able to delegate at least 4 to 8 participants for the HEInnovate training in H2 September 2021 and are dedicated to carrying out a HEInnovate self-assessment in Q4 2021. Training activities will be open for free to any relevant staff of the selected HEIs.

## 5. How to apply?

To participate in the EIT Western Balkans HEI Capacity Building on Circular Economy program, the applicants must fill in the attached application form and submit it via email to:

[tina.benda@eitrawmaterials.eu](mailto:tina.benda@eitrawmaterials.eu)

The deadline for submission of the proposal is **31 Aug 2021 at 14:00 CET**.

Only applications submitted in English will be accepted; applications submitted in other languages or a different way than requested will not be considered. The program implementation will be also in English.

## 6. Funding terms

There is no direct funding in this program for the HEIs, HEIs selected will receive seats and the invitation to education programs for their staff as well as expert coaching to organize their HEInnovate self-

<sup>1</sup> Current list of EIT member HEIs: <https://www.eit-hei.eu/assets/pdf/hei-partners-list.pdf>

assessment and its interpretation whereas KICs are providing networking opportunities and support for invited HEIs for successful EIT Higher Education Initiative participation.

## 7. How are the applications evaluated?

The applications will be first evaluated based on the following eligibility criteria:

- The applicant must be a Higher Education Institution located in any of the eligible countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia
- The applicant must not be a member of any of the KICs participating in this program.
- The application must be written in English.
- Incomplete submissions or submissions via any other routes (other than how it is specified in the relevant chapter of this document) will not be accepted.
- Applicants commit to sending a minimum of 4 to 8 participants for the HEInnovate training from different management levels as well as representing faculty and business units

The applications that pass the eligibility criteria will be evaluated and ranked based on the following objective criteria and processes.

The evaluation of applications shall be carried out by each involved KIC. The applications will be evaluated based on the university's demonstrated link to Circular Economy either through education or research, the potential to increase capacity for business incubation and entrepreneurship education, and the university's potential to successfully integrate with the local ecosystem within a mid-term timeframe.

Criteria	Weight
Connection to the circular economy sector through education and/or research activity	25%
Local ecosystem available	25%
Level of engagement, availability of a business unit (i.e a Technology Transfer Office, an incubator or an internationalization office/department)	20%
Current activities with any of the KICs	10%
How the applicant would co-host a Circular Economy MeetUp	20%

A score will be given by all involved KICs concerning each criterion based on the following guidelines and a weighted average will be calculated:

Score	Appreciation	Explanation
0	N/A	The proposal fails to address the criterion or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information
1-3	Poor	The criterion is inadequately addressed, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.
4-5	Fair	The proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses.
6-7	Good	The proposal addresses the criterion well, but several shortcomings are present.
8-9	Very Good	The proposal addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present.
10	Excellent	The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.

The scores will be used to produce the ranking list. At least the minimum threshold of 4 must be reached in each criterion. The highest-ranking 2 HEI will be invited to co-host a Circular Economy MeetUp with the KICs in November 2021. Once a decision is reached, there is no opportunity to appeal.

The successful and unsuccessful applicants will be informed in writing (via email) about the result of the selection procedure. A cooperation agreement will be offered to the HEIs selected to co-host a MeetUp. 5 days after receipt of the agreement from the EIT RawMaterials, the selected applicant shall provide a confirmation to commit for co-hosting one of the MeetUps and sign and date the agreement and return it to EIT RawMaterials. In case the winning applicant is unable to provide confirmation (and enter into an agreement) within the above period, the KICs may decide to contract the following best.

#### Key dates

- **Application submission: 31 Aug 2021 at 14:00 CET**
- HEInnovate training workshops online: 3 days in September 2021
- HEInnovate self-assessment: September – October 2021
- Action planning for 2022: November 2021
- MeetUps, November 2021

## 8. Do you have any questions?

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact:

***Tina Benda, RIS Manager at EIT RawMaterials***

***tina.benda@eitrawmaterials.eu***