

## 1.6 EIT RIS Hubs Minimum Standards and Guiding Principles

### CONTEXT

The [EIT SIA 2021-2027](#), designates “increasing the regional impact of the EIT KICs”, through an enhanced [EIT Regional Innovation Scheme \(RIS\)](#), reinforced with a significantly stronger mandate and additional financial resources, as a key, EIT priority. While this recognises the Scheme’s success since its establishment, as well as its potential to do more, expectations on the EIT RIS to deliver increasing levels of impact, in line with the EIT’s objectives, are very high. To meet these expectations, the EIT RIS needs to have “all hands-on deck”, with the whole EIT Community working together towards a common goal. In particular, it must be ensured that the EIT RIS Hubs, with their unique, on-the-ground presence across Europe, strongly contribute to the EIT’s objectives and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

Towards this aim, a set of minimum standards and guiding principles for EIT RIS Hubs, have been drawn up in close consultation with the Cross-KIC Strategic Regional Innovations (SRI) Cluster and the EIT-KIC Forum, and fully aligned with, and complimentary to, the EIT Legislative Framework and the [EIT RIS Implementation Framework \(2022-2027\)](#). This document sets out a common strategic approach, which will underpin the establishment and operation of all EIT RIS Hubs, aimed at ensuring their consistent effectiveness in contributing towards achieving the EIT’s objectives and KPIs, while also rationalising the EIT Community’s on- the-ground presence. These minimum standards and guiding principles will be the basis for the Business Plan 2023-2025 process with some pilot actions rolled out in 2022. This document will be reviewed and potentially updated in 2024.

### MISSION

In line with Article 2(4) of the [EIT Regulation](#), EIT RIS Hubs are “physical hub, established by a KIC and forming part of its structure, in a Member State or in an associated country targeted by the RIS and that serves as focal point for the KIC’s activities and for the mobilisation and involvement of local knowledge triangle actors in the activities of the KIC”. EIT RIS Hubs form the backbone of the EIT RIS’ “place-based” innovation approach and have the core mission of delivering on the EIT’s objectives and KPIs, especially those directly related to the EIT RIS. The EIT Legislative Framework also includes a goal that the EIT RIS Hubs could pave the way to the establishment of a Co-Location Centre in the targeted region.

### EIT RIS HUB MINIMUM FUNCTIONS

To deliver on their mission, all existing and future EIT RIS Hubs are required to fully perform the following minimum functions, all of which must be specifically included as fundamental requirements in all contractual agreements between the local EIT RIS Hub organisations and their EIT KICs:

- Improve the innovation capacities of the local ecosystem

EIT RIS Hubs must deliver on the EIT RIS' core objective of improving the innovation capacities of local ecosystems, through capacity building activities, and closer interactions between the local knowledge triangle innovation actors (such as, clusters, networks, regional public authorities, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), research organisations, Vocational Education and Training (VET) institutions, SMEs) and their activities. These activities should include the dissemination of the EIT Community's results and good practices, as well as activities focused on citizen engagement. EIT RIS Hubs should be able to demonstrate measurable results and impact of their activities and provide opportunities for feedback from local ecosystem stakeholders and adjust their activities accordingly.

- Attract and facilitate the integration of new participants in EIT Community activities

EIT RIS Hubs must directly support the EIT RIS' objective of attracting and facilitating the integration of potential new partners and participants in the EIT KICs and their activities. The EIT RIS Hubs must strongly promote EIT Community opportunities within the local innovation ecosystems and help to link these to the EIT Community's pan-European innovation ecosystems. EIT RIS Hubs must also serve as a pipeline of talent and innovation potential (including students, ideas, start-ups, etc) towards the EIT Community, manifestly contributing to the attainment of the EIT's objectives and KPIs, including the EIT KICs' Financial Sustainability targets and the RIS Hub's own Financial Sustainability targets.

To do this, the EIT RIS Hubs must liaise closely with local/regional/national authorities and stakeholders, including the EIT National Contact Points (NCPs). NCPs are expected to act as an assistance, information and referral point for potential beneficiaries, who will be redirected to the respective local EIT RIS Hub or EIT KIC Office according to their needs. To achieve this, the Hubs should regularly provide the EIT NCPs with all relevant information to support their core functions, and if requested, help the NCPs understand the specificities around the KIC they represent and the type of activities they deliver. Once an EIT Community RIS Hub is established in a particular country or territory, the consolidated provision of information to the local EIT NCPs can be centrally delivered by the EIT Community RIS Hub EIT Community Officer with fully support from the EIT RIS Hubs. This should also enable EIT RIS Hubs and NCPs to team up for regular outreach, communication and awareness raising activities, and eventually reach new audiences and increase the number of national EIT beneficiaries.

The detailed task sharing and cooperation rules for all local EIT related local entities should be described in the establishing MoU of the EIT Community RIS Hub, which will be signed by the contributors. The management of the MoU signature (as all coordinating tasks) are the responsibility of the national EIT Community Officer (ECO).

The EIT RIS Hubs should additionally actively scout for the most promising talent and innovation potential in their local ecosystems with a view to channel such talent towards their EIT KICs' education programmes, Accelerators and so on.

- Support the establishment of synergies

With support from the EIT in a “door opener” role, via the national EIT Member State Representative Group (MSRG) representative and NCPs, the EIT RIS Hubs must spearhead efforts to establish synergies between EIT Community activities and the local innovation ecosystem, aligned with the relevant Regional Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisation (RIS3). EIT RIS Hubs should engage with relevant local authorities as well as, undertake regular mapping exercises to identifying potential funding and collaboration opportunities.

With a view towards the EIT RIS Hubs' own financial sustainability, they should also actively seek possibilities for co-funding of their activities from local private and public funding sources. Special attention should be paid to efforts aimed at realising synergies with the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) and the Instrument for Pre-Accession assistance (IPA III). Here too, the EIT will support in a “door opener” role, via the national EIT MSRG representative and NCPs. EIT RIS Hubs must additionally serve to support the implementation of synergies identified between the EIT and the European Innovation Council (EIC), including by contributing to capacity building actions under the EIT - EIC Fastrack Scheme and facilitating the cross participation of local start-ups and SMEs in EIT and EIC activities.

- Coordinate with other EIT RIS Hubs and other EIT KIC Offices

To fully perform all these minimum functions, each EIT RIS Hub must coordinate its work closely with other Hubs and EIT KIC Offices, such as Co-Location Centres and Satellite Offices, present in the same innovation ecosystem. This includes providing other EIT RIS Hubs and EIT KIC Offices with regular updates on its ongoing and planned activities, including via any coordination mechanisms to be put in place, as well as, concrete cooperation, including joint activities with a view to maximise impact. Once an EIT Community RIS Hub is established covering a given country or territory, all Hubs present in that ecosystem should be linked to it and therefore, this coordination and information distribution amongst EIT RIS Hubs and other EIT KIC Offices will be supported by the EIT Community RIS Hub EIT Community Officer.

The EIT RIS Hubs should dedicate, on average, 10% of their time to coordinate with the EIT Community RIS Hub, other EIT RIS Hubs and other EIT KIC Offices. Additionally, each EIT RIS Hub must also be able to accurately address queries beyond their EIT KIC specifically, including helping to refer stakeholders to contact persons within other relevant EIT KICs, better suited to support their needs.

## EIT RIS HUB KEY GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Establishment of new EIT RIS Hubs

Any new EIT RIS Hubs will only be established following the consent of the EIT, with any decision taken based on a thorough needs analysis. Plans for new Hubs must be reported in the Country-specific roadmaps which will be drawn up in consultation with and adopted by the EIT as part of the Business Plan process. The EIT KICs are entitled to propose updates to their Country-specific roadmaps, in circumstances driven by unforeseen fundamental changes that make this necessary, including lessons learnt from the launch of the two EIT RIS Community Hub pilots in 2022, for consideration by the EIT.

The aim of the Country-specific roadmaps is to describe, in a single document, the country-specific plans of the KICs, to be implemented either individually or jointly, including:

- planned changes in a KIC's on-the-ground presence;
- a timeline towards the establishment of the local EIT Community RIS Hubs; and;
- plans for Cross-KIC activities, aligned with the local RIS3 priorities, to be implemented locally.

[The last version of the country-specific roadmap adopted by the KICs and the EIT on November 8, 2023 is the governing one, the modifications and adaptations that become necessary after the agreement are recorded by the EIT and the KICs in an attached annex.](#)

The Country-specific roadmaps must take into consideration the specificities of the target territory and will be officially approved by the EIT as part of the 2023-2025 Business Planning process. Country-specific roadmaps should be drawn up for all EIT RIS-eligible country and territory at either national or Regional-level.

New EIT RIS Hubs should ensure complementarity with existing EIT RIS Hubs and other EIT KIC Offices present locally, as well as the local EIT Community RIS Hub, once established. New EIT RIS Hubs should also contribute to boosting the EIT KICs' geographical balance across the EIT RIS-eligible countries and territories. Additionally, the engagement of local organisations or other entities to serve as EIT RIS Hubs, must be subject to an open call process. Where appropriate, non-country specific open Calls to set up new, impact driven, EIT RIS Hubs, are encouraged.

- Integration of EIT RIS Hubs into EIT Community RIS Hubs

By the end of 2020, 97 EIT RIS Hubs had been established to drive the successful implementation of the EIT RIS. The concentration of multiple EIT RIS Hubs in some countries is creating a complex landscape which many stakeholders are struggling to navigate, yet, at the same time, several EIT RIS-eligible countries and territories do not have on-the-ground representation by some or even any EIT KICs. In this context, focus should now shift towards strengthening local-level synergies and ensuring the presence of the EIT Community in every EIT RIS-eligible country and territory. Towards this end, the Cross-KIC SRI Cluster will be mandated and provided with the necessary resources to establish EIT Community RIS Hubs to be run by a EIT Community Officer covering every

EIT RIS-eligible country and territory, by the end of 2025, either at the national or Regional (such as Baltics, Western Balkans, etc)-level.

These EIT Community RIS Hubs will, primarily, be a coordination mechanism, providing local innovators with a unified source of information on all services and opportunities provided by the entire EIT Community, both locally and internationally. It will also serve as a centralised gateway, for local innovators, to all EIT KICs, irrespective of their local on-the-ground representation.

In those ecosystems where EIT RIS Hubs are already established, the EIT Community RIS Hubs will aim to integrate these Hubs' and rebrand them as Community Members. Community Members will maintain their RIS Hub functions but will be required to:

- undertake a rebranding and renaming exercise aimed at external stakeholders;
- to commit to an enhanced level of cooperation with the other Community Members operating under the same EIT Community RIS Hub, including by implementing joint activities.

In exchange, they will not lose any of the operational independence they enjoyed prior to integration, and will not be requested to relocate. A common naming and branding approach across all EIT Community RIS Hubs and their Community Members will be put in place. Once EIT RIS Hubs become Community Members, they will be commonly renamed to "EIT [KIC name] RIS Hub [country], member of the EIT Community RIS Hub [country]". This will allow for each EIT Community RIS Hub to be displayed as a unitary Hub on the EIT's external communications maps.

Each EIT Community RIS Hub will be run and coordinated by an EIT Community Officer chosen by the Cross-KIC SRI Cluster, following an open call process or employed directly by the entity which is agreed by the KICs to take over the ECO role (local CLC or RIS Hub). The EIT Community Officer can be a natural person or an entity as well. In case of the selection of an entity, the lead expert qualification, who is taking over the ECO role, must be the major selection criteria. This lead expert can be just replaced with a contract amendment accepted by the Cross-KIC SRI Cluster. The ECO must be fluent both in English and in the official local language/s. A list of tasks and responsibilities of the ECO are included in annex 1.

With active support from the EIT, as appropriate, national authorities may be invited to finance or co-finance the cost of establishing and / or operating their local EIT Community RIS Hub, as well as joint activities aligned with the local RIS3 priorities from which all Community Members could potentially benefit.

Unless external funding can be found, the cost of the EIT Community Officer, who will be compensated based on a performance-based system of remuneration, other direct and indirect costs related to the running of the EIT Community RIS Hub, such as the operation of the website <https://eit-ris.eu>, the set up and maintenance of a small physical space (if this cannot be accommodated in an existing EIT Community space or another offered

space), as well as Cross-KIC management costs related to operationalising the Hubs, will be covered from the Cross-KIC SRI Cluster's budget. The Cross-KIC SRI Cluster's budget for 2023-2025, will be adequately increased to reflect this, having taken into consideration a total cost estimation to be drawn up by the Cluster. Similarly, unless external funding can be found, Cross-KIC activities could be jointly financed from the EIT Community RIS Hub Community Members' budgets.

As with all aspects of this document, where necessary, starting from 2023, the contractual agreements between the local organisations running an EIT Community RIS Hub Network Member and their EIT KICs should be updated, to reflect this provision.

Six pilot EIT Community RIS Hubs has been established in 2022 and 2023, starting in North Macedonia, followed by Latvia, Ukraine, Cyprus, Malta and Croatia. On the basis of learnings gleaned from the establishment and initial operation in these six pilot EIT Community RIS Hubs, the process for the establishment of the remaining 19 EIT Community RIS Hubs covering all EIT RIS- eligible countries and territories by 2025 might be fine-tuned. The intention is that 14 EIT Community RIS Hubs will be established in 2024, followed by the final 5 in 2025. A clear establishment schedule is contained in the Country-specific roadmaps.

- EIT RIS Hub financing

EIT RIS Hubs are co-funded by the EIT KICs as either a local independent organisation or a consortium of organisations working with the EIT KICs as KIC partners, subcontractors or subgrantees. Local organisations engaged to serve as EIT RIS Hubs will only be eligible to receive EIT RIS funding for operational activities directly related to the fulfilment of its mission. Administrative costs such as offices and related infrastructure, personnel costs, and so on, are not eligible. All EIT RIS Hubs must demonstrate cost effectiveness.

As part of their Business Plan submissions, the EIT KICs should also include binding, multi-annual Financial Sustainability targets for each of their EIT RIS Hubs. While subject to the final Memorandum of Cooperation review, in principle, all EIT RIS Hub will need to achieve 100% financing from non-EIT sources by the time their EIT KIC reaches the maximum fifteen-year period of EIT grant support. This means that for the first wave KICs' EIT RIS Hub, 100% financing from non-EIT sources will need to be reached by the end of 2024.

The Cross-KIC SRI Cluster should develop a unified and simplified evaluation and reporting principles to ensure that each EIT KIC can establish a system to closely track, measure, and assess the timely performance of their own EIT RIS Hubs. These unified principles will ascertain the measurement of the performance of the EIT RIS Hubs against a common set of concrete, time-bound and measurable, multi-annual impact delivery KPIs, which demonstrate contribution to the EIT's and EIT KICs' objectives and KPIs. The targets for each EIT RIS Hub will need to be communicated to the EIT for approval as part of the Business Plan process.

A unified and simplified evaluation and reporting system shall also be introduced for the EIT Community RIS Hubs to assess the performance of the EIT Community Officers. This system will be operated by all the KICs jointly in the Cross-KIC SRI Cluster project. The EIT Community Officers' individual targets will need to be communicated to the EIT for approval as part of the Business Plan process.

Since both evaluation systems will be performance based, in cases of underperformance applicable financial penalties and other mitigating measures, should be transparently delineated. The EIT approved the EIT RIS Hubs unified and simplified evaluation and reporting principles based on the EIT Common List KPIs and the revised suggestion of the unified and simplified evaluation and reporting system for the EIT Community RIS Hubs is under evaluation of EIT in 2023 containing also the adequate monitoring mechanism as part of its monitoring strategy in 2023.

## ANNEX: LIST OF TASKS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE EIT COMMUNITY OFFICER

- Develop a good understanding of the EIT model and keep up to date with the KICs activities;
- Form good working relations with all EIT Community RIS Hub Community Members, and other EIT KIC Offices present in the same ecosystem both nationally and Regionally;
- Manage the signature of the EIT Community RIS Hub MoU with all local EIT representations on the ground to finalise the establishment of the EIT Community RIS hub
- In consultation with the EIT Community RIS Hub Community Members, and other EIT KIC Offices present in the same ecosystem, establish a smooth and efficient working method which limits the administrative burden on the EIT Community RIS Hub Community Members, and other EIT KIC Offices, while supporting their minimum functions;
- Set up and maintain a physical space, in a city accepted by the Cross-KIC SRI Cluster and the EIT, after having consulted with the national authorities, where local stakeholders, including NCPs, can physically, walk-in to obtain information on, as well as gain access to the EIT Community, while additionally, aiding with the EIT's on-the-ground visibility and branding;
- Design an appropriate work method and necessary tools for information sharing / coordination so as to facilitate continuous information exchange between the Hub Community Members, EIT RIS Hubs and other EIT KIC Offices present in the same ecosystem both nationally and Regionally;
- Collect information to share through applicable channels related the EIT KICs' activities, events, results and opportunities of interest to local stakeholders with a view to their dissemination internally and externally;
- Coordinate the collection of local funding opportunities and relevant key national events and bring these to the attention to the local Hub Community Members, EIT RIS Hubs and

other EIT KIC Offices.

- Contribute to, support and where appropriate, with the agreements of the EIT KICs, lead any horizontal exploratory efforts towards securing co-funding opportunities, including securing meetings with relevant national / regional authorities and facilitate the preparation for the submission of joint proposals for national / regional funding in case of general Cross-KIC actions;
- Coordinate and support the EIT RIS Hubs local joint communication efforts, including by:
  - managing and updating the EIT Community RIS Hub website <https://eit-ris.eu>, in the local language, with information on EIT Community activities and opportunities, including dedicated sections targeted towards specific stakeholders, including, students, start-ups, national authorities and so on;
  - facilitating the organisation of EIT Community awareness-raising events, including possible open days within the context of INNOVEIT (the EIT's annual innovation forum), and coordinating and supporting the participation of EIT Community representatives in relevant national events;
- To the greatest extent possible, ensure a coordinated approach amongst the EIT KICs' RIS Hubs towards national authorities including relevant NCPs and Managing Authorities;
- Scout for and recommend to the EIT KICs opportunities to implement joint projects financed through other EU / national / regional funds (including ESIF and IPA III);
- Suggest and support, including, where appropriate and with the agreement of the EIT KICs, lead, the implementation of possible joint activities amongst the EIT KICs, to be implemented nationally and / or Regionally, aligned with relevant RIS3 priorities;
- At the request of the EIT KICs, support any necessary updating of the local Country-specific roadmap and support with its implementation, as appropriate;
- Serve as a centralised contact gateway for local stakeholders to the EIT Community as a whole, and refer stakeholders to contact persons within other relevant EIT KICs, best suited to support their needs.;
- Identify the need for and facilitating the implementation of shared services for Hub Members with a view to improve efficiency;
- Upon request, provide support, additional to that already offered by the EIT RIS Hubs, to the EIT and the EIT KICs with navigating the local innovation landscape, including by contributing to the development of EIT maps / ecosystem mapping;
- Any other tasks mandated by the EIT Management which, in principle, supports the EIT RIS Hubs to contribute to the achievement of the EIT's Objectives and implementation of its Strategy and Annual Work Programmes.