Culture & Creativity

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# EIT Culture & Creativity Business Plan 2026-2028

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*This version of the Business Plan has been edited for readability and presentation purposes only. No changes have been made to the approved content, and all information remains consistent with the formally approved Business Plan. In the event of any discrepancy, the approved version of the Business Plan shall prevail.*

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## Executive Summary

**EIT Culture & Creativity is Europe's platform for innovation, investment, and capacity building across the Cultural and Creative Sectors and Industries (CCSI). As a pan-European Knowledge and Innovation Community (KIC), we connect local talent, regional investors, and global partners to accelerate cross-border growth, strengthen competitiveness, and deliver societal and environmental impact. Culture and creativity are Europe's next strategic engine of transformation – delivering high-quality jobs, reinforcing democratic identity, driving green and digital transitions, and securing Europe's competitiveness in global value chains.**

EIT Culture & Creativity's approach to innovation and growth is grounded in the recognition that Europe's cultural and creative sectors are characterised by diverse career paths, a high share of freelancers and micro-enterprises, and evolving forms of work. Strengthening skills, entrepreneurship, and intellectual property frameworks can therefore contribute to improving agency, resilience, and long-term sustainability of creative careers. By embedding fair value creation, responsible AI use, and transparent IP practices across its activities, EIT Culture & Creativity supports a more balanced and sustainable innovation ecosystem that aligns economic competitiveness with social responsibility and European values.

### Why This Matters

The Cultural and Creative Sectors and Industries (CCSI) employ 7.9 million people (3.8% of total EU employment), generate €413 billion in turnover, and contribute €199 billion in value added to the EU economy. Yet despite this scale and strategic importance, access to finance across the sector remains geographically uneven, highly fragmented, and structurally risk-averse, limiting the capacity of creative organisations and enterprises to innovate, scale, and adopt new technologies.

This matters not only for the future competitiveness of Europe's CCSI, but also for Europe's wider economic and societal transformation. Without stronger investment conditions, Europe risks losing creative talent, market share, and cultural influence on other global regions with more mature innovation ecosystems. At the same time, the CCSI plays a critical role as an enabler of transformation across sectors. Through its capacity to drive creativity, user-centred innovation, digital adoption, and new business models, the sector supports transformation in industries ranging from manufacturing and mobility to education, tourism, health, and digital services. When the CCSI is constrained, Europe's broader innovation capacity is constrained with it.

EIT Culture & Creativity responds to this challenge by transforming a fragmented landscape into a cohesive, pan-European innovation and investment ecosystem — strengthening the capacity of the CCSI to innovate, scale, and act as a catalyst for inclusive growth, sustainability, and European competitiveness across sectors.

### Europe's Cultural Sovereignty in the Age of Transformation

Europe's sovereignty will increasingly depend on its ability to control, valorise, and protect its cultural assets in an era defined by AI, geopolitical fragmentation, and intense global competition. Europe must move beyond defensive strategies and actively build the infrastructures, standards, and investment mechanisms that ensure European creativity, values and knowledge can shape global systems – not the other way around. Cultural and creative innovation is not a "soft power" accessory; it is a strategic capability. By empowering creators, safeguarding

cultural data, and enabling technological leadership rooted in European values, EIT Culture & Creativity strengthens Europe's autonomy, resilience, and long-term competitiveness.

**Objectives and Priorities 2026–2028**

For 2026–2028, EIT Culture & Creativity will scale activity across education, business creation, and innovation around these five strategic priorities:

- **Revenues & Partnerships** – diversify income streams and strengthen strategic collaboration beyond EIT funding;
- **Impact on the CCSI** – deliver measurable economic, societal, cultural, and environmental benefits across Europe;
- **Governance & Trust** – uphold high standards of accountability, transparency, and ethical leadership;
- **Funding Cascade** – expand a fast, efficient, compliant model for channelling resources to partners and beneficiaries;
- **Financial Independence** – build long-term resilience through public-private partnerships, anchor platforms, and impact-aligned investors.

By 2028, EIT Culture & Creativity will achieve partial financial independence from EIT funding, securing EUR 42.67M in non-EIT revenues (2026–2028) and achieving an average yearly financial sustainability ratio of 31%.

**How We Deliver**

Our integrated model combines all three EIT pillars:

- **Education** – equipping students and professionals with creative, entrepreneurial, and AI-ready skills;
- **Innovation** – developing solutions supporting green transition, digital transformation, and social resilience;
- **Business Creation** – accelerating startups and scale-ups to grow across borders and attract investment.

Delivery is enabled by a pan-European partnership of universities, research institutes, businesses, cultural organisations, and municipalities, with strong participation from EIT Regional Innovation Scheme (RIS) partners to ensure inclusive regional growth.

**Flagship Initiatives 2026–2028**

**1. AI & Cultural IP Licensing**

Generative AI is reshaping Europe's creative economy. Without clear frameworks, creators risk uncompensated extraction of cultural content, while AI developers face rising compliance obligations under the EU AI Act and EU copyright law.

EIT Culture & Creativity will lead the development of the **European Cultural IP Licensing Infrastructure.** It will enable:

- a centralised, automated licensing mechanism for AI training datasets;
- fair remuneration and transparent attribution for creators;
- simplified one-stop licensing for AI developers;

- compliance with EU law, UNESCO conventions, and cultural protection frameworks;
- strengthening of Europe's position as a global standard-setter in cultural rights and responsible AI.

This initiative is developed in alignment with our updated IP Policy, Horizon Europe standards, and collaboration with EUIPO and EIT Digital.

**2. NEB – Cultural & Creative Innovation**

EIT Culture & Creativity will operationalise the New European Bauhaus (NEB) principles throughout the CCSI as an implementing partner of the NEB Academy. Activities will:

- promote NEB Innovation Pathways through societal transformation in regional ecosystems;
- Support the transition towards circular and regenerative practices of SMEs and public actors;
- develop and disseminate NEB toolkits, methodologies and curricula across CCSI subsectors, supporting uptake in policy, business, and education, capitalising on EIT platforms, particularly in RIS countries;
- inform and align with EU policies on sustainability, inclusion, resilience and cultural innovation, ensuring measurable contributions to the European Green Deal, EU Culture Compass for Europe and the NEB initiative.

**3. Investor Connector Model (Core Financial Sustainability Mechanism)**

The Investor Connector Model links regional investors with international co-investors, providing a scalable mechanism for both impact and financial sustainability. The following steps highlight how the model is being implemented:

- a proof of concept demonstrated at the IBC broadcasting media & tech show (Sept 2025) and the BBC Innovation Programme (Dec 2025);
- we will scale up 2026–2028 across audiovisual, architecture, gaming, fashion, design, and cultural heritage sectors;
- activities include investor forums, cross-border pipelines, sector intelligence reports, and accelerator-style investment pilots.

**Sector Deployment Overview (2026–2028)**

During the period 2026–2028, EIT Culture & Creativity will implement a focused and phased approach to its strategic priorities, ensuring concentration of resources where short-term impact and industry engagement potential are highest.

<u>In 2026, the KIC will prioritise the sectors:</u>

- **Audiovisual**: immersive media, AI ethics, green production/accelerator pilots, investor forums, AV marketplace;
- **Fashion:** circular fashion, digital assets/material innovation labs, showcases;
- **Architecture**: NEB-led green living environments, sustainable and liveable cities/NEB challenges, circular construction pilots.

This will be complemented by a cross-sector thematic focus on industry resilience, intellectual property and AI-driven transformation, in cooperation with strategic partners such as the European Union Intellectual Property Office.

From 2027 onwards, EIT Culture & Creativity will extend the scope to include: **Gaming** (applied gaming, VR/AR for heritage/innovation sprints, cross-sector pilots) and **Cultural Heritage** (digital preservation, adaptive reuse/heritage hackathons, tourism pilots).

Across all priorities, strengthening industry engagement and increasing private-sector participation remain key levers for impact, sustainability and innovation deployment.

**New MarCom & Partnership Growth Model**

EIT Culture & Creativity will expand communication and partnership acquisition by integrating:

- investor connector models
- sector anchor platforms
- cross-European industry associations
- policy engagement with EUIPO, NEB, DG EAC, DG CNECT, IBC and others.

**Expected Results by 2028 (Key KPIs)**

- **Financial**: EUR 42.7 million non-EIT revenues; 30% financial sustainability ratio;
- **Ventures**: 650 start-ups/scale-ups supported; EUR 40 million in attracted investment;
- **Innovation**: 220 market-ready solutions; 100 generating revenues > EUR 10 000;
- **Education**: 18,750 professionals trained; 6,250 EIT-labelled graduates;
- **Partnerships**: 40 new partners from less-innovative regions; 15–20% RIS participation.

**Impact by 2028**

**EIT Culture & Creativity will deliver:**

- **economic impact**: thriving SMEs, cross-border scaling, increased private investment in CCSI;
- **societal impact**: stronger cohesion, cultural participation, and democratic resilience;
- **environmental impact**: NEB-aligned circular and low-carbon practices across and through the creative industries;
- **technological impact**: European leadership in cultural AI, data governance, and IP standards.

Through this Business Plan, EIT Culture & Creativity will achieve financial sustainability and set a European benchmark for how culture and creativity drive systemic transformation, shaping a future where European values, creativity, and innovation reinforce global competitiveness.

## 1. Excellence with regard to the KIC's Multiannual Strategic Agenda 2021–2027

### 1.1 Objectives and ambition

**Strategic alignment with the KIC's Strategic Agenda 2021-2027**

The Business Plan 2026–2028 operationalises the KIC's Strategic Agenda 2021–2027. EIT Culture & Creativity (EIT Culture & Creativity) was founded to unlock the innovation potential of Europe's KIC (CCSI), ensuring their contribution to competitiveness, resilience, and sustainability. This plan translates the multiannual vision into concrete actions that strengthen innovation ecosystems, accelerate entrepreneurship, and secure financial independence.

It contributes to the agenda by:

- **addressing societal challenges**: embedding cultural innovation in digital, green, and social transitions;
- **enhancing Knowledge Triangle Integration (KTI)**: connecting education, research, and business creation in all activities;
- **Contributing to the EIT Impact Framework**: delivering measurable results in startups, skills, regional capacity, and systemic change;
- **Advancing strategic priorities**: ensuring EIT Culture & Creativity becomes a financially sustainable innovation community by 2028.

**Objectives and priorities of the Business Plan 2026–2028**

The plan is guided by five **SMART objectives** (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, time-bound), directly linked to the Strategic Agenda and selected for their high innovation potential.

***Table 1 - SMART Objectives of the Business Plan 2026–2028***

| Objective | SMART Target by 2028 |
|---|---|
| Expand innovation capacity | Support **650 ventures** & **100 collaborative projects**, with **50% RIS participation** |
| Enhance skills & education | Train **>6,000 learners** via EIT-labelled & professional programmes, embedding **AI, sustainability, IP, civic engagement** |
| Systemic impact pilots | Launch **5 pilots**-, **co-financed** by regions |
| Financial sustainability | Generate **EUR 40 million+ revenues** from diversified sources |
| Global leadership | Engage **>1,000 partners/members**, positioning EIT Culture & Creativity as Europe's hub for cultural innovation |

These priorities address underinvestment in creative entrepreneurship, fragmented ecosystems, and gaps in digital and green skills.

**Ambition and impact beyond state-of-the-art**

The Business Plan aims not only at incremental progress but at transformative impact:

1. **Systemic innovation** – Societal transformation pilots in RIS regions integrate culture into regional strategies, driving industrial diversification, regeneration, and citizen participation. They act as blueprints for replication across Europe.
2. **Entrepreneurship beyond grants** – EIT Culture & Creativity applies equity and SAFE agreements with startups and scaleups, combining financial returns with mission alignment. A growing venture portfolio will generate exit opportunities and reinvestment.
3. **Next-generation skills** – Programmes integrate AI, sustainability, IP, and entrepreneurship into cultural curricula, equipping professionals with transversal skills for cross-sector innovation. Linking education with ventures and pilots establishes a new model of KTI.

Together, these pillars create a **coherent innovation ecosystem** where ventures, skills, and systemic pilots reinforce one another, delivering measurable results under the EIT Impact Framework.

**Path to Financial Sustainability (2026–2028)**

EIT Culture & Creativity will reach sustainability through a **diversified revenue model**:

- **ROI & equity**: portfolio of 100+ ventures with exit opportunities;
- **education**: NEB Academy, EIT-labelled degrees, professional learning, modular training;
- **services & consulting**: advisory for regions, EU institutions, corporates;
- **membership fees**: tiered packages for universities, companies, institutions;
- **alternative funding**: philanthropy, PPPs, and family offices (avoiding private equity in order to preserve mission alignment).

***Table 2 - KIC Revenues (EUR)***

| KIC revenues (EUR) | 2026 planned | 2027 planned | 2028 planned |
|---|---|---|---|
| **ROI & Equity** | 500 000 | 1 000 000 | 1 000 000 |
| **Education** | 1 800 000 | 3 000 000 | 3 000 000 |
| **Services & consulting** | 200 000 | 300 000 | 500 000 |
| **Membership fees** | 1 900 000 | 2 300 000 | 3 000 000 |
| **Alternative funding** | 6 200 000 | 8 000 000 | 10 000 000 |
| **Total revenues** | **EUR 10 600 000** | **EUR 14 600 000** | **EUR 17 500 000** |

By 2028, EIT Culture & Creativity will exceed **EUR 42.7 million accumulated revenues**, ensuring a steady path towards independence from EIT funding and resilience through diversified income streams.

**Conclusion**

The Business Plan 2026–2028 translates the Strategic Agenda into clear objectives and an actionable roadmap. It combines systemic innovation, entrepreneurial growth, and advanced education to position EIT Culture & Creativity as the **pan-European enabler of cultural innovation**. Through ambitious yet achievable targets, it ensures a contribution to Europe's competitiveness and societal resilience while delivering on the EIT Impact Framework. By achieving Financial Sustainability by 2028, EIT Culture & Creativity will secure its long-term role as a mission-driven, self-sustaining innovation community.

**Strategic Focus, Business Model, value proposition and top priority areas 2026**

**a) Strategic Focus**

EIT Culture & Creativity's strategic focus for 2026 is to position the KIC as Europe's leading catalyst for cultural and creative innovation, where creativity intersects with deep tech, AI, and sustainability-driven transformation. The KIC aims to bridge cultural value creation with industrial and digital innovation ecosystems; lead the ethical and human-centric adoption of AI across the CCSI; accelerate societal transformation in RIS regions; and strengthen financial sustainability through diversified revenue sources. EIT Culture & Creativity will act as a trusted bridge between CCSI actors, industry, academia, and policy stakeholders to scale innovation across Europe.

**b) Business Model**

EIT Culture & Creativity's business model combines grant-based innovation mechanisms with revenue-generating services and returns from investment instruments. Key components include:

- FSTP open calls driving bottom-up innovation and leveraging regional and private co-financing;

- investment instruments (equity, SAFEs, co-investment through partner-managed venture funds) generating ROI for long-term reinvestment;
- alternative funding through public-private partnerships, philanthropic capital, and family office co-investments;
- education revenues from EIT-labelled degree programmes, micro-credentials, and executive training;
- membership and service fees via the Digital Hub (Hivebrite), offering premium access to data, networks, and innovation services.

This multi-revenue model balances impact with financial return, supporting progressive independence from EIT funding.

**c) Value Proposition**

EIT Culture & Creativity is the pan-European enabler of creative innovation, connecting, creatives, entrepreneurs, researchers, investors, and industry to co-create transformative solutions.

- for industry: creative innovation pipelines, access to talent, and AI-enabled transformation tools;
- for policymakers: tested models for regional regeneration, sustainability, and cultural participation;
- for investors: de-risked, purpose-driven opportunities linking creativity with impact capital;
- for academia: pathways for entrepreneurial learning and research-to-innovation transfer.

Creativity is Europe's competitive advantage; EIT Culture & Creativity transforms it into a strategic driver of innovation, sustainability, and prosperity.

**Prioritisation of Three Strategic Areas for 2026 Calls**

For 2026, EIT Culture & Creativity should prioritise three Horizontal strategic objectives that form a strong foundation for sustainable growth and visibility, while allowing for a measured ramp-up year with fewer but highly focused calls.

1. **AI and Emerging Technologies for Culture and Creativity (AI Flagship Initiative)**
   This creates the technological backbone for the KIC and positions EIT Culture & Creativity within Europe's wider AI ecosystem. It integrates innovation, business creation, and education by developing AI tools, datasets, and workflows tailored to creative sectors. It reinforces Europe's leadership in ethical, human-centric AI and builds long-term investment potential.
2. **Societal Transformation and Regional Innovation (RIS Pilots)**
   Pilot interventions in three structurally transforming regions (e.g. Ostrava, Kosice, Sofia) will demonstrate how creativity drives local regeneration and economic diversification. These pilots combine public funds with regional co-financing and serve as scalable models for place-based innovation.
3. **Financial and Business Innovation for Creative Enterprises**
   This priority strengthens the entrepreneurial base of the CCSI and supports EIT Culture & Creativity's financial sustainability strategy. It includes investment readiness programmes, SAFE and equity financing, and partnerships with family offices, philanthropic foundations, and impact investors.

Together, these priorities: demonstrate EIT Culture & Creativity's ability to merge creativity, technology, and investment; reinforce the innovation pipeline; and lay the groundwork for expansion into education, policy, and community engagement in 2027–2028.

At the same time, EIT Culture & Creativity will have a focus on the Intervention Areas in 2026. The KIC will prioritise the Audiovisual, Fashion & Architecture sectors, complemented by a cross-sector thematic focus on industry resilience, intellectual property and AI-driven transformation, in cooperation with strategic partners such as the European Union Intellectual Property Office.

From 2027 onwards, Gaming and Cultural Heritage and related domains will be further scaled, building on tools, methodologies and partnerships developed during the initial phase.

Across all priorities, strengthening industry engagement and increasing private-sector participation remain key levers for impact, sustainability and innovation deployment

**Prioritisation of topic Areas for 2026 and the outlook beyond**

**Topic areas for 2026:**

**Audiovisual: Industry-driven acceleration**

Within the Audiovisual priority area, EIT Culture & Creativity will place a strong emphasis on **expanding industry engagement and co-financing** through structured partnerships and sector-driven collaboration mechanisms.

Strategic partnerships, including the IBC collaboration, will be leveraged to attract additional industry partners across the Audiovisual value chain (content creation, production, distribution, broadcasting, platforms and technology providers). In addition, **sector-specific industry advisors** will be engaged to support:

- the design of calls
- tarket relevance of innovation actions
- access to industrial networks.

This approach directly supports increased private-sector participation, faster innovation deployment and venture scaling.

**Fashion & Architecture: Design-led transformation and sustainability**

Fashion and Architecture are addressed as a **combined design-led transformation cluster** in 2026, reflecting their shared innovation drivers related to sustainability, circularity, digital tools and new business models.

In 2026, EIT Culture & Creativity will leverage the **Fashion Adaptor under the New European Bauhaus (NEB)** as a key mechanism to:

- engage industry partners and designers
- support experimentation with sustainable and digital solutions
- connect creative practices with industrial and societal transformation.

Industry advisors will be engaged in a **targeted and light-touch manner**, focusing on design innovation, material transformation, digital workflows and market uptake.

**Horizontal 2026 Topic: Industry Resilience, IP and AI Transformation**

In 2027, EIT Culture & Creativity will introduce a **cross-sector thematic focus** on strengthening the resilience of Cultural and Creative Sectors and Industries in the context of digital transformation and artificial intelligence.

This topic will be implemented in cooperation with strategic partners such as EUIPO and will address:

- intellectual property challenges related to AI-generated content
- data use and rights management
- business model adaptation and legal preparedness
- AI-related risks and opportunities for creative enterprises.

Actions under this topic will be embedded across Audiovisual, Gaming and Fashion & Architecture, contributing to more resilient innovation ecosystems and increased industry readiness for AI-driven transformation.

**Phased Introduction of Additional Topic Areas (from 2027)**

- **Gaming: Technology-enabled scaling and cross-sector (AV) spillovers (2027)**

Gaming is prioritised in 2027 due to its strong integration of advanced technologies, high scalability of products and ventures, and significant spillover potential across education, culture, health and creative technologies.

Industry engagement in Gaming will be supported through **lightweight advisory involvement**, drawing on experienced industry practitioners and scale-up founders to:

- validate innovation challenges
- support venture acceleration activities
- connect startups and scale-ups with industry partners and publishers.

This ensures market-driven implementation while maintaining agility and cost-efficiency.

- **Cultural Heritage and Heritage-led Spatial Design (2027)**

Cultural Heritage and related spatial and heritage-driven domains will be prioritised from 2027 onwards. This sequencing enables EIT Culture & Creativity to:

- build on tools, methodologies and governance frameworks developed in 2026;
- ensure stronger AI ethics, data governance and public-sector readiness;
- maximise systemic and territorial impact, particularly in EIT RIS regions.

This phased approach reflects longer innovation cycles and stronger public-sector dependency, while preserving the strategic importance of Cultural Heritage within the KIC portfolio.

**Phased Prioritisation, Industry Engagement and Impact Focus (2026–2028)**

| Cross-area Theme | Priority Year | Industry Engagement Logic | Key Levers | Expected Impact Focus |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Industry Resilience, IP & AI | 2026 | Cross-sector thematic integration | EUIPO cooperation, embedded actions across sectors | AI readiness, IP protection, ecosystem resilience |

| Topic Area / Theme | Priority Year | Industry Engagement Logic | Key Levers | Expected Impact Focus |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Audiovisual | 2026 | Strong industry-driven approach with structured partnerships and advisors | Strategic partnerships (e.g. IBC), sector advisors, targeted outreach | Industry partner growth, innovation deployment, venture scaling |
| Fashion & Architecture | 2026 | Design-led engagement linked to EU policy initiatives | NEB Fashion Adaptor, targeted industry advisors | Sustainable innovation, digital transformation, market uptake |
| Gaming | 2027 | Lightweight advisory engagement focused on scalability and market relevance | Industry practitioners, scale-up mentors | Venture creation, scale-up growth, cross-sector innovation |
| Cultural Heritage | 2027 | Public-sector and ecosystem-driven engagement | Tools and methods developed in 2026 | Systemic impact, territorial transformation, public value |

**Strategic Priorities, Strategic Innovation Agenda (SIA) Alignment and Focus Areas (2026–2028)**

| Strategic Priority | SIA Strategic Challenge | Strategic Objective | Focus Areas | Primary Work Packages | Implications for Calls & Budget Allocation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Skills for Transformation in the CCSI | Skills | Strengthen future-proof skills and entrepreneurial mindsets enabling creative talent and professionals to drive innovation and systemic transformation across the Cultural and Creative Sectors and Industries. | ▪ Interdisciplinary skills combining creativity, technology and business<br>▪ Entrepreneurial, innovation management and IP capabilities<br>▪ AI literacy and responsible AI use in creative | WP2 Education (lead)<br>WP1 Innovation (support)<br>WP4 EIT RIS (support) | ▪ Education and training-focused calls with clearly defined learning outcomes<br>▪ Balanced allocation between higher education, professional and lifelong learning formats<br>▪ Emphasis on |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | contexts<br>▪ Lifelong learning, upskilling and reskilling, including non-degree and professional education | | scalable and modular programmes with cross-sector relevance |
| 2. Innovation Deployment for Systemic Impact | Innovation Deployment | Accelerate the deployment and adoption of innovative solutions addressing structural challenges and enabling value creation across CCSI ecosystems. | ▪ Application-driven innovation projects and pilots<br>▪ Integration of emerging technologies, including AI, into creative value chains<br>▪ Cross-sector collaboration between creatives, industry and technology providers<br>▪ Ecosystem activation and local transformation, including EIT RIS regions | WP1 Innovation (lead)<br>WP4 EIT RIS (lead/support) | ▪ Innovation calls focused on deployment readiness and real-world application<br>▪ Budget concentration on projects with strong industry and public-sector engagement<br>▪ Clear pathways from innovation actions to business creation and scaling |
| 3. Venture Creation and Scaling in the CCSI | Venture Scaling | Enable the creation, growth and scaling of competitive CCSI ventures with European and global market potential. | ▪ Startup and scale-up acceleration programmes<br>▪ Investment readiness and access to finance, including alternative funding models<br>▪ Market access, internationalisation and corporate collaboration<br>▪ Portfolio development and long-term value creation for the KIC | WP3 Business Creation (lead)<br>WP4 EIT RIS (support) | ▪ Differentiated calls for early-stage creation and scale-up support<br>▪ Increasing budget share for follow-on support and high-potential ventures<br>▪ Alignment of funding intensity with venture maturity and scaling potential |

**AI (AI Continent Action Plan)**

The AI Action Plan operationalises EIT Culture & Creativity's AI Flagship, integrating innovation, business creation, and education.

**Innovation (WP1)**

- development of modular AI architectures, datasets, and tools across heritage, design, media, AI-assisted sustainability, and immersive technologies;
- establishment of the European Creative AI Testbed for evaluation, benchmarking, provenance tracking, and compliance with AI Act requirements;
- deployment of cross-sector AI Living Labs in selected regions.

**Business Creation (WP3 & WP4)**

- AI Venture Accelerator supporting 30 AI start-ups;
- SAFE-to-equity pathways aligned with partner-managed venture funds;
- AI Industry Network co-developing and validating tools with companies;
- RIS AI Adoption Programme supporting SMEs in transformation regions.

**Technical Roadmap**

- Federated Creative Data Commons aligned with EU data centre infrastructures and connectivity;
- modular AI architecture layers including explainability, copyright, trademark and IP transparency, and ethical audit logs;
- multi-level testing protocols for bias, interoperability, energy efficiency, and provenance validation;
- governance layer integrating an IP & AI Registry (e.g. in collaboration with EUIPO).

**Policy Advisory Boards and Cooperation with EU Programmes**

EIT Culture & Creativity will engage actively in Policy Advisory Boards across its five priority areas, collaborating with relevant EU programmes such as Creative Europe, Horizon Europe Clusters, Digital Europe Programme, European Data Spaces, and the New European Bauhaus. Participation will include:

- contributing evidence-based insights from pilots and innovation actions;
- representing CCSI interests in policy dialogues and standardisation processes;
- supporting alignment between EU research, innovation, and skills agendas;
- facilitating innovation uptake from EU-funded research into market and societal applications;
- ensuring interoperability with European partnerships such as RCHP and other culture/tech initiatives.

EIT Culture & Creativity focuses on AI adoption, governance and deployment of applications for creative industries, not on foundational AI system development or building technical infrastructure.
The KIC will ringfence EUR 5 million from the EIT Funding to support and promote AI initiatives being the budget split as follows:

- AI & IP Monetisation Pilots (35%)
- AI Venture Acceleration (30%)

- Revenue Model Prototyping (20%)
- Policy & Compliance Labs (10%)
- Impact Evaluation & Monitoring (Comms to educate the sector) (5%)

## 1.2 Methodology

**Overall approach**

The Business Plan 2026–2028 translates EIT Culture & Creativity's strategic objectives into operational steps designed for efficiency, impact, and sustainability. The methodology combines **partner-driven implementation**, **targeted internal activities**, and **streamlined governance** to maximise outcomes under the EIT Impact Framework. It builds on lessons learned from the first years of operations, applying simplification measures and ensuring compliance with the **EU Taxonomy Regulation** and the **Do No Significant Harm (DNSH) principle**: no activity funded under the plan will harm climate change mitigation, climate adaptation, water, circular economy, pollution prevention, or biodiversity objectives.

**Partner involvement in Business Plan implementation**

Partners remain central to decision-making and delivery. EIT Culture & Creativity applies a **co-creation model**:

- **Strategic Topic Groups (STGs):** partners define priority areas for calls and guide portfolio design;
- **Calls for projects:** partners are the main beneficiaries of sub-granting, either through open competitive calls; partner-specific calls, or (exceptionally) direct awards;
- **Regional hubs (Co-Location Centres):** partners anchor activities locally, ensuring RIS participation and co-financing.

**Visual 1 – Partner Roles in Implementation**

**Drivers of Business Plan design and call types**

Three main drivers have shaped the design:

1. **mission alignment** with systemic innovation, entrepreneurship, and education;
2. **efficiency**, reducing administrative burden through streamlined calls;
3. **financial sustainability**, incentivising co-financing, revenue generation, and investment.

**Combination of calls:**

- **open calls** ensure transparency and inclusion. Most of the funding is cascaded through open calls;
- **partner calls** secure continuity in multiannual or specialised areas;
- **direct awards** are used only for highly strategic interventions (e.g. EIT Label, IP policy) where efficiency outweighs competition.

The utilisation of lump sums for FSTP will be encouraged whenever it is feasible.

**Internal activities**

Certain functions are implemented by the KIC Legal Entity (LE) and affiliates, as they cannot be efficiently delivered by the partnership:

- **governance & compliance:** legal, HR, finance, IP management, audits;
- **business creation instruments:** SAFE/equity agreements require direct LE contracting;
- **branding, communication, and public affairs:** ensuring a consistent European presence;
- **monitoring & evaluation:** centralised for comparability and audit-readiness;
- **coordination & cascade funding implementation.**

These activities provide the framework that enables partner-led innovation.

**Simplification and resource efficiency**

The plan integrates lessons learned:

- **one-stop digital hub** for calls, reporting, and partner services;
- **simplified templates** and harmonised evaluation criteria;
- **lean governance:** empowered committees for faster decisions;
- **resource efficiency:** shared service centres for finance, HR, and IT avoid duplication.

**Evolution of the ecosystem and governance**

To increase effectiveness, the BP foresees the following:

- **partnership evolution:** expansion into new sectors (gaming, design-tech, AI in media, fashion, architecture sectors), consolidation of existing clusters.
- **governance changes:** leaner Board structures (Supervisory and Executive Boards) and at least two Managing Directors with clearer division between strategy and operations.
- **regional hubs (Co-Location Centres, CLCs):** performance assessed through clear KPIs:
    1. Co-financing ratio
    2. Ventures supported
    3. RIS impact indicators
    4. Membership growth

CLC and Regional Hubs will be subject to an assessment aiming for consolidation or restructuring to ensure maximum efficiency.

**Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)**

AI is used responsibly in three domains:

1. **education:** embedding AI literacy and ethics in curricula;
2. **business creation:** supporting AI-enabled ventures with robust ethics checks;
3. **internal operations:** AI for data analysis, translation, and partner engagement.

All uses follow **EU AI Act principles**: transparency, human oversight, bias mitigation, and privacy. No high-risk autonomous decision-making systems are deployed in governance.

**Open science**

Open science is integral to EIT Culture & Creativity's methodology, and involves:

- **open access** to research results from supported projects;
- **early and open sharing** of data and outputs where feasible (e.g. preprints, open repositories);
- **citizen participation** in pilots through co-design of solutions.

Where commercial IP is involved, open practices are balanced with protection to safeguard venture sustainability.

**Social sciences, humanities, and gender dimension**

- **Social sciences and humanities (SSH) integration:** central to pilots and innovation projects, providing insights into behaviour, inclusion, and social impact.
- **Gender equality:** implemented through the **EIT Gender Equality Action Plan**:
    - increasing women's participation in entrepreneurship and STEM-linked education;
    - inclusive programme design with gender-sensitive analysis in content and outcomes;
    - gender balance in supervisory, managerial, and staff roles across sub-granted actions;
    - monitoring of KPIs to ensure accountability.

**Summary of methodology**

The methodology ensures partner ownership, efficient governance, and compliance with sustainability and inclusiveness requirements.

**Visual 2 – Methodological Logic**

This methodology ensures the Business Plan 2026-2028 is **partner-driven, efficient, and ambitious**, embedding sustainability, inclusiveness, and financial resilience into its design. It leverages lessons learned, strengthens governance, and secures the conditions for long-term impact and independence beyond EIT funding.

The phased prioritisation of topic areas and the strengthened industry engagement approach further reinforce the alignment between the Strategic Innovation Agenda (SIA) 2021–2027 and the operational implementation of the KIC. By sequencing sector focus and embedding industry and policy partnerships, EIT Culture & Creativity ensures both strategic focus and flexibility while addressing the SIA challenges on skills, innovation deployment and venture scaling.

## 2. Impact

### 2.1 KIC pathway to impact

- Business Plan Overview: The EIT Culture & Creativity Business Plan 2026–2028 aims to mainstream innovation and entrepreneurship in the cultural and creative sectors across Europe.
- Impact Pathway: The plan outlines a pathway aligned with the EIT Strategic Agenda 2021–2027, focusing on structured expansion, territorial cohesion and innovation activation.
- Policy Alignment: Supports EU policies like the New European Bauhaus, Creative Europe, and the European Green Deal.
- Bridge to Future Strategy: The 2026–2028 period serves as a bridge to the next Strategic Framework for FP 10 2028–2034, ensuring each KPI achieved delivers immediate value and unlocks capacity for the future.

***Table 2.1 - Portfolio impact aligned with the EIT Impact Framework***

| Task | Budget (million EUR) | Short-term KPIs (outputs/results) | Medium-term KPIs (outcomes) | Long-term KPIs (impact) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.1 Project Management | 2.29 | Manage & coordinate innovation portfolio; legal/financial/admin support; gender and risk compliance; EU policy alignment | Improved delivery, accountability, and risk management; supports EITHE02.1/EITHE02.4/EITHE05.1 | EIT Culture & Creativity positioned as a leading CCSI innovation support mechanism |
| 1.2 Innovation Calls | 20.5 | 1 call/year; ~30 Step-1 & 15 Step-2 projects funded; mentoring & Virtual Demo Day | ~40 innovations at TRL7-9 by 2028; supports EITHE02.4/EITHE06.1 | 60+ market-ready innovations launched; significant boost to EU CCSI competitiveness |
| 1.3 Innovation Forum | 0.1 | Annual forum with 5+ projects showcased; investor & partner networking | Increased scaling opportunities; supports EITHE02.2/EITHE06.1 | EIT Culture & Creativity recognised as the EU leader in creative innovation |
| 1.4 Scale + | 1.5 | Start ups supported from Innovation projects | Start ups created from Innovation projects | Entrepreneurship, job creation innovation to the market |
| 2.1 Management & Coordination | 1.79 | WP coordination; FSM setup; MEL framework; annual market analysis updates | Operational FSM tracking; responsive programme design; supports EITHE07.1/EITHE08.1/EITHE09.1/EITHE05.1 | Financial sustainability of education portfolio; adaptive, competitive sector |
| 2.2 ACE Learning Platform | 0.8 | ACE platform launched; blended/digital/live courses; AI translation integration; future skills pathways; B2B/B2C revenue models | High RIS & non-EU participation; growing subscription & sponsorship income; supports EITHE07.1/EITHE08.1/EITHE11.1 | Inclusive, pan-European learning ecosystem; recurring income; bridges digital & regional divides |
| 2.3 Degree Education Portfolio | 8.2 | 2 double-degree masters; 18 EIT-labelled modules; 3 seasonal schools; 19 scholarships | >500 learners; >300 graduates employment-ready; scholarships enhance inclusion; supports EITHE07.1/EITHE07.2/EITHE09.1 | Sustainable revenue-sharing model; innovation-driven workforce; strong academia-industry-research integration |
| 2.4 Non-degree Education Portfolio | 11.5 | 42 CPD courses (24 labelled, 18 non); 12 labelled transversal courses; 5 webinar series | >3 000 professionals upskilled; improved SME resilience; diversified revenues; supports EITHE08.1/EITHE08.2 | Strong talent pipeline; adoption of innovative practices; scalable FSM |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2.5 Alumni, Outreach & Engagement | 1.5 | Alumni programme & events; 20 mentors/year; 120 mentees; pitching competitions; marketing & outreach | 3 000 engaged alumni; integrated growth pipeline; improved diversity & RIS participation; supports EITHE05.1/EITHE09.1 | Cohesive CCSI community; continuous venture pipeline; lasting cross-pillar synergies |
| 3.1 Coordination, FSM & MEL | 0.76 | Internal coordination of venture programmes; QA & reporting; FSM model (SAFE/quasi-equity/sponsorships); MEL framework | Cross-pillar integration;650 ventures supported by 2028; early revenues from sponsorships/ticket sales; supports EITHE03.1/EITHE04.1/EITHE06.1/EITHE11. | Financially sustainable venture-support system; globally competitive CCSI ecosystem |
| 3.2 Venture Building Growth & Scaling | 13.6 | 9 annual venture-builder calls; 12 hackathons; seed funding & structured venture support. Two intakes/year per stage (Spark/Shape/Scale); grants (15 000 –1 m EUR) & tailored mentoring | Dozens of CCSI start-ups created; stronger early-stage pipeline; supports EITHE04.1. **650** ventures investment-ready; >10 m EUR external investment attracted; supports EITHE03.1/EITHE06.1 | Robust pipeline of creative entrepreneurs; innovation culture; future equity returns. Thriving CCSI scale-ups; equity returns to KIC; Europe-wide competitiveness |
| 3.4 Follow-on Services (100-To-Watch) | 3.5 | Annual event; curated investor/corporate matchmaking; talent & market support | Higher investment readiness; more deals closed; supports EITHE06.1 | Long-term venture success; strong investor & partner network |
| 3.5 Access to Finance | 0.2 | 250+ investor network; annual trend research; alternative funding instruments prototyped | Improved access to finance; supports EITHE06.1/EITHE11.* | Mature CCSI investment ecosystem; sustainable FSM-based revenues |
| 3.6 Marketing & Alternative Revenue Streams | 0.1 | Year-round campaigns; 10 pipeline-generation & 15 investor-focused events; corporate matchmaking package | Larger, more diverse venture pipeline; higher brand recognition; supports EITHE03.1/EITHE06.1/EITHE11.* | Sustained inflow of high-quality ventures; diversified income sources |
| 4.1 Leadership & Coordination | 0.12 | Design RIS Hub model for EIT Culture & Creativity and activate it via 2 RIS Hubs calls (2026 & 2028) in collaboration with Education, Innovation, Business Creation & Transformation & NEB across regions. | Functional coordination structures; stakeholder alliances embedded in ecosystems; supports EITHE07.* (learners), EITHE03.* (start-ups) | Sustainable RIS Hubs; strong KTI presence & innovation capacity in under-represented regions |
| 4.2 RIS Hubs | 0.5 | Disseminate and communicate on activities and opportunities within the KIC through dedicated events and online activity. Increase outreach & awareness in RIS regions. Connect with high level | Greater participation in KTI activities; improved talent development & venture readiness; supports EITHE07.1/EITHE03.1 | Increased investment & innovation output in RIS; equitable pan-European pipeline |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | representative to anchor EIT Culture & Creativity in regions and countries. | | |
| 4.4 RIS & Knowledge Tri-angle Integration (incl. FSM) | 10 | Train 11 000+ learners; support 75 start-ups; onboard 80 education partners; fund 8-10 innovation pilots<br>Design & pilot FSM schemes (tuition, licensing, equity-for-service); identify ERDF/national co-funding; deliver degree & non-degree programmes; targeted calls & venture programmes | Operational FSM across KTI in RIS; gender-sensitive financing models; improved Education-Innovation-Business Creation synergies; supports EITHE07, EITHE02, EITHE03, EITHE06. | Sustainable revenue sources for RIS; increased financial autonomy & longevity of interventions |
| 6.2 Strategic communication & events | 1.5 | Flagship events (incl. "100-to-watch", Demo Day, Creative Skills Week, , Ars Electronica ,NEB festival); media coverage. | Larger audiences, media reach; steady flow of results to EC tools (EITHE16.1). | Durable reputation & pipelines for uptake/exploitation in next SA cycle. |
| 6.3 Stakeholder engagement | 1.16 | EU stakeholder meetings; partner convenings; CRM-supported outreach. | Stronger partner activation; supports EITHE10.1 growth. | Persistent community that lowers acquisition costs and sustains membership revenues. |
| 6.4 Disemina-tion & exploita-tion | 0.48 | Results to Horizon Results Platform/EIT Knowledge Centre; exploitation roadmaps. | Increased reuse/adoption of outputs; traceability of results. | Normed result-to-market/policy pathways beyond BP. |
| 8.2 Targeted partnership ser-vice offerings | 0.36 | Partner onboarding/retention processes; gap mapping; cross-WP governance. EITHE08.1, EITHE09.1 | Higher uptake of services; membership revenue growth, EITHE07.1. ≥80% partner retention; stronger representation of under-served sectors/RIS. EITHE08.1, EITHE09.1 | Resilient, diverse partner base driving portfolio results; income from services/memberships. EITHE07.1 |
| 8.4 Governance & partner ac-count manage-ment | 0.15 | KAM model across CLCs; engagement calendar; RIS inclusion. EITHE08.1, EITHE09.1 | Predictable participation & satisfaction; balanced representation. EITHE08.1 | Trust & long-term partnerships supporting FS. EITHE07.1 |
| 8.5 Strategic Topic Groups (STGs) | 2.5 | Thematic co-creation & analyses; early project shaping; alternative funding scouting. EITHE08.1 | Investment-ready propositions; co-funding pathways; market/policy insights. EITHE08.1 | Enhanced influence & pipeline feeding innovation/NEB; diversified revenues. EITHE07.1 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9.1Leadership & Coordination | 3.21 | Establish NEB leadership structure; coordinate NEB activities with Education, Innovation, and Business Creation; launch and implement annual NEB work plan | Integrated NEB action across all WPs; stronger collaboration between thematic areas and RIS hubs; supports EITHE14.* (citizens engaged, societal impact) | Mainstreaming NEB principles into CCSI innovation; recognised EU leader in sustainable, inclusive, and beautiful design |
| 9.2 Design Systemic Transformation | 23.37 | Launch annual NEB-specific innovation and education calls; fund 5-NEB demonstrators | Demonstrable NEB solutions adopted in markets; increased participation from design, architecture, and creative SMEs; supports EITHE02., EITHE03., EITHE14.* | Systemic adoption of NEB approaches across Europe; measurable societal and environmental benefits |

***Table 2.1a - List of EIT core KIPs***

| **EIT area** | **KPI Code** | EIT KPI | **Target 2021-2027** | **Agg.targets 2021-2024 (planned in 2025)** | **Target 2026-2027** | **Target 2028** | **Indicate the targets per WP** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Innovation** | EITHE02.4 | Innovations launched on the market with a sales revenue of at least 10 000 EUR documented | 77 | 9 | 68 | 32 | **100** |
| **Business Creation** | EITHE04.4 | Start-ups created having a financial transaction of at least 10 000 EUR for a service/product (result of the KIC KAVA) sold to customers | 79 | 0 | 79 | 61 | **140** |
| | EITHE05.1 | Start-ups created by students enrolled and graduates from EIT-labelled programmes | 32 | 1 | 31 | 29 | **60** |
| | EITHE06.1 | Investment attracted by KIC-supported start-ups and scale-ups (MEUR) | 16.25 | 0.75 | 15.5 | 24.5 | **40** |
| **Education** | EITHE07.1 | Graduates from EIT-labelled programmes | 3 360 | 114 | 3 246 | 7 964 | **11 210** |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Leveraging inv. in R&I** | EITHE11.2 | Financial sustainability coefficient - Total non-EIT financing generated by the KIC Legal Entity | 26% | 21% | 30% | 30% | **30%** |
| **Horizontal outputs** | EITHE18.1 | % of less represented gender in top governance and management positions combined | 40% | 40% | 40% | 40% | **40%** |

***Table 2.1b - List of EIT KPIs***

| EIT area | KPI Code | EIT KPI | Target 2021-2027 | Aggregated targets 2021-2024 | Target 2026-2027 | Target 2028 | Indicate the targets per WP |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Innovation** | EITHE02.1 | Innovations launched on the market | 155 | 17 | 138 | 82 | 220 |
| | EITHE02.2 | Innovations launched on the market by organisations from EIT RIS countries | 23 | 3 | 21 | 12 | 33 |
| **Business Creation** | EITHE03.1 | KIC Supported Start-ups/Scale-ups | 440 | 90 | 350 | 300 | 650 |
| | EITHE03.2 | KIC Supported Start-ups/Scale-ups registered in EIT RIS countries | 88 | 18 | 70 | 60 | 130 |
| | EITHE04.1 | Start-ups created | 159 | 8 | 151 | 129 | 280 |
| | EITHE04.2 | Start-ups created in EIT RIS countries | 32 | 2 | 30 | 26 | 56 |
| | EITHE06.2 | Investment attracted by KIC-supported start-ups and scale-ups established in EIT RIS countries | 3 | 0.15 | 3 | 5 | 8 |
| **Education** | EITHE05.2 | Start-ups established in EIT RIS countries by students enrolled and graduates from EIT-labelled programmes | 5 | 0 | 5 | 4 | 9 |
| | EITHE07.2 | Graduates from EIT-labelled programmes with citizenship in EIT RIS Countries | 1 008 | 34 | 974 | 2 389 | 3 363 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | EITHE08.1 | Participants in non-labelled education and training | 18 750 | 1 150 | 17 600 | 12 000 | 29 600 |
| | EITHE08.2 | Participants in non-labelled education and training with citizenship in EIT RIS countries | 5 625 | 345 | 5 280 | 3 600 | 8 880 |
| **KTI / Ecosystems** | EITHE10.1 | Active partners collaborating in the KIC | 626 | 136 | 490 | 300 | 790 |
| **ecosystems** | EITHE10.2 | Active partners registered in the EIT RIS countries collaborating in the KIC | 157 | 34 | 123 | 75 | 198 |
| **Leveraging** | EITHE12.1 | KICs SIA funding rate | 80% | 84% | 90% | 80% | 87% |
| **investments in R&I** | EITHE13.1 | Financial asset valuation (MEUR) | 7.38 | 2.22 | 7.38 | 10 | 10 |
| **Horizontal outputs** | EITHE16.1 | Results disseminated through the EC dissemination tools | **N.A.** | **N.A.** | 81 | 45 | 126 |
| **Strengthening entrep. and innov. of HEIs** | EITHE20.1 | Number of new Partnerships established as a result of the HEI Capacity Building Initiative | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **RIS-specific indicators** | EITHE22.1 | Number of new and established KIC Partners from RIS countries | 36 | 12 | 24 | 16 | 40 |

**Alignment to the Strategic Innovation Agenda (SIA) 2021-2027 and new framework in 2028**

The EIT Culture & Creativity Business Plan 2026-2028 outlines a coherent and ambitious impact pathway aligned with the objectives of the EIT Strategic Agenda 2021-2027 and builds the bases to bridge into a new framework in 2028. While all targets for SIA 2021-2027 are committed, the SIA Funding rate is an exception to this. In the SIA, the funding rate of the KIC was significantly lower than the one established as max. rate in the EIT regulations for a starting KIC. In this Business Plan, the SIA funding rate has been calculated according to the maximum determined in the in Decision 13/2021 of the EIT Governing Board on the principles of Financial Sustainability of the KICs:The application of the criteria above would result in an average 87% funding rate for EIT Culture & Creativity:

| Start up | | | | Ramp up | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2023 | 2024 | 2025 | 2026 | 2027 | 2028 | 2029 |
| 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 80% | 80% | 80% |

| SUGA | BP2024-2025 | BP2026-2028 |
|---|---|---|
| | 100% | 87% |

## 2.2 Measures to maximise impact: Communications, stakeholder engagement, dissemination and exploitation

**Contribution to the EIT Community brand**

EIT Culture & Creativity positions communication as a **strategic enabler for both visibility and impact amplification**. The KIC is fully committed to strengthening the **EIT Community brand** across all activities by ensuring consistent, prominent recognition of **EIT and EU support**, in line with the Partnership Agreement (PA). This includes:

- **full compliance** with EU and EIT visibility guidelines across digital assets, events, publications, and startup materials
- **EIT-labelled diplomas and certificates** prominently carrying EIT branding;
- **all sub-granted ventures and projects** required to apply EIT visual identity guidelines;
- **active contribution** to cross-KIC initiatives, including EIT Awards, EIT Alumni, EIT House campaigns, and joint actions with other CLCs.

By 2028, EIT Culture & Creativity will achieve **100% visibility compliance** across all projects, awards, and programmes, reinforcing the role of the EIT Community as Europe's leading innovation ecosystem.

**External communication activities**

Externally, communication aligns with the **KIC Strategic Agenda** objectives of awareness, engagement, and reputation building. The overarching aim is to position **cultural and creative innovation as a key driver of European competitiveness, resilience, and cohesion**, particularly in RIS regions and underrepresented sectors.

**Target audiences:**

- **policy stakeholders** (EU institutions, national ministries, regional authorities);
- **industry associations and clusters** within the CCSI;
- **investors and funders** (family offices, PPPs, impact investors);
- **educators and students** (especially young creatives);
- **general public & media** (raising awareness of cultural innovation).

**SMART objectives by 2028:**

- increase **media mentions in EU-level and sectoral outlets by 25% annually**;
- grow **unique visitors to the Digital Hub by 20%** and **social engagement rates by 15%**, compared with the 2025 baseline;
- achieve **75% active partner participation** in co-branded campaigns and dissemination activities.

**Tools & channels:**

- **owned media:** website, Digital Hub, newsletters, podcasts, and video series;
- **shared platforms:** EIT website, Horizon Results Platform, EU Science Hub;
- **earned media:** sectoral press, mainstream outlets, op-eds, and success-story features;
- **events & exhibitions:** annual Innovation Day, policy dialogues, graduation ceremonies, RIS regional showcases.

**Approach:**
Storytelling and co-branded campaigns will be prioritised, with editorial content showcasing **projects, lessons learned, and societal impact**. Tailored outreach will be developed for specific audiences such as **young creatives, RIS partners, and policymakers**, ensuring tone and channels are fit for purpose.

**Partners' Contributions**

Partners' expertise across the five CCSI macro-sectors (Heritage, Design & Materials, Media & Audiovisual, Architecture & Spaces, Performing & Visual Arts) is mobilised through:

- strategic Topic Groups shaping thematic roadmaps and innovation priorities;
- cross-sector innovation consortia encouraged by open call design;
- thematic clusters within CLCs supporting regional scouting and engagement;
- partner-led implementation of EIT-labelled education programmes;
- sector-specific business creation support, mentoring, and infrastructure access;
- contributions to the Digital Hub through knowledge assets and insights.

**CLCs' Roles and Contributions:**

The main roles of the CLCs are:

- **Ecosystem:** Engagement with the partners of the region and expanding the partnership with new members;
- **Financial Sustainability:** Pursuing opportunities to obtain local, regional and national funding;
- **Communications and Events:** Organise and attend events in the region.

Additional CLC contributions include dissemination of calls, organisation of regional innovation days, facilitation of industry engagement, and coordination of RIS pilots.

Finally, the legal entities host staff hired in the country of the CLC and working for other functions in the organisation (Innovation, Coordination, etc) in the context of a matrix organisation.

A network of Senior Advisors across CCSI sectors will further support partner mobilisation, sector intelligence, and engagement with European industry organisations.

**Sector Partnerships and Ecosystem Platforms**

To operationalise its partnership strategy, EIT Culture & Creativity establishes structured collaborations with leading industry platforms, sector associations, and ecosystem organisations across the Cultural and Creative Sectors and Industries (CCSI). Given the highly fragmented nature of the creative economy, engagement with representative organisations enables the KIC to reach and mobilise large communities of companies, creators, investors, research actors, and public institutions through a limited number of strategic partnerships.

This sector-based partnership model allows the KIC to move beyond predominantly bilateral relationships towards a more coordinated ecosystem approach, ensuring scalable outreach, stronger industry engagement, and

more efficient dissemination of programmes and opportunities. By collaborating with organisations representing entire value chains and sector communities, EIT Culture & Creativity strengthens connections between start-ups, SMEs, corporates, research organisations, investors, and policy actors across Europe.

These partnerships also enhance the KIC's capacity to identify sector needs, accelerate innovation uptake, support cross-sector collaboration, and strengthen the role of the CCSI as an enabler of wider economic and societal transformation.

**The sector partnership approach provides three strategic advantages:**

**Scale – Efficient Ecosystem Access**
Partnerships with major industry organisations provide systemic access to large networks of companies, creators and professional communities. This enables EIT Culture & Creativity to mobilise stakeholders across entire subsectors of the creative economy, significantly expanding programme reach and participation.

**Efficiency – Reduced Transaction and Engagement Costs**
Aggregated engagement through sector platforms reduces the need for numerous individual partnerships and lowers transaction and outreach costs. This model simplifies partnership management while enabling efficient dissemination of calls, programmes and innovation opportunities.

**Pipeline – Stronger Innovation and Business Creation Flows**
Sector organisations provide structured access to innovators, startups, SMEs and corporates within their ecosystems. This strengthens the identification of high-potential innovators and improves the pipeline of projects and companies entering EIT Culture & Creativity's programmes.

Through this model, sector partnerships directly support the implementation of the KIC's activities by strengthening innovation pipelines and corporate collaboration (WP3), supporting regional ecosystem engagement and RIS development (WP4), and expanding sector-wide dissemination and stakeholder engagement (WP7).

Overall, this partnership architecture positions EIT Culture & Creativity as a pan-European orchestrator of cultural and creative innovation ecosystems, capable of connecting industry, academia, investors and public stakeholders to accelerate innovation and entrepreneurship across the creative economy.

**Sector Partnership Framework**

To operationalise the sector-based partnership model, EIT Culture & Creativity collaborates with leading industry organisations and ecosystem platforms across the five priority sectors of the KIC. These partnerships provide structured access to large professional and industry networks, enabling efficient mobilisation of innovators, companies and institutions across Europe.

By working with representative organisations that aggregate sector communities, the KIC can efficiently generate innovation pipelines, facilitate industry validation and accelerate market uptake of projects emerging from its programmes.

The following examples illustrate the sector partnership architecture and the ecosystem reach it provides.

| Sector | Key Industry Organisations & Ecosystem Platforms | Expected Outcomes | Estimated Ecosystem Reach |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Audiovisual & Media** | International Broadcasting Convention (IBC); European Broadcasting Union (EBU); European VOD Coalition; Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity; Music Tech Europe | Corporate challenge programmes; proof-of-concept pilots; access to broadcasters, streaming platforms and advertising ecosystems; global visibility for creative-tech innovation. | IBC (~44 000 attendees; 1 300 exhibitors); EBU (~113 broadcasters operating 2 000+ channels); Cannes Lions (~11 000 industry leaders annually). |
| **Fashion & Design** | Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana; European Fashion Alliance; EURATEX; British Fashion Council; Fédération de la Haute Couture et de la Mode | Circular fashion innovation challenges; entrepreneurship pipelines for designers and fashion-tech startups; industry validation and access to international fashion ecosystems. | EURATEX (~160 000 companies across the European textile value chain); European Fashion Alliance networks representing thousands of designers and brands. |
| **Gaming & Interactive Media** | European Games Developer Federation (EGDF); Video Games Europe; Gamescom; Ubisoft; Supercell | Startup scouting and acceleration pipelines; collaboration with major studios and publishers; industry pilots and investor access. | EGDF (~2 500 game development studios); Gamescom ecosystem (~300 000 visitors annually). |
| **Architecture & Built Environment** | Architects' Council of Europe; International Union of Architects; New European Bauhaus ecosystem; European Construction Industry Federation (FIEC) | Innovation pilots for sustainable and digital built environments; professional sector adoption; integration of design and sustainability innovation. | Architects' Council of Europe (~500 000 architects represented across Europe); FIEC (~32 national construction federations). |
| **Cultural Heritage** | Europa Nostra; Europeana Foundation; Network of European Museum Organisations (NEMO); International Council of Museums (ICOM); European Cultural Tourism Network | Digital heritage innovation pipelines; cross-border dissemination of heritage innovation projects; integration of heritage data into creative-tech applications. | Europeana (~50 million digital heritage objects); NEMO (~178 organisations across 39 countries); ICOM (~50 000 museum professionals worldwide). |

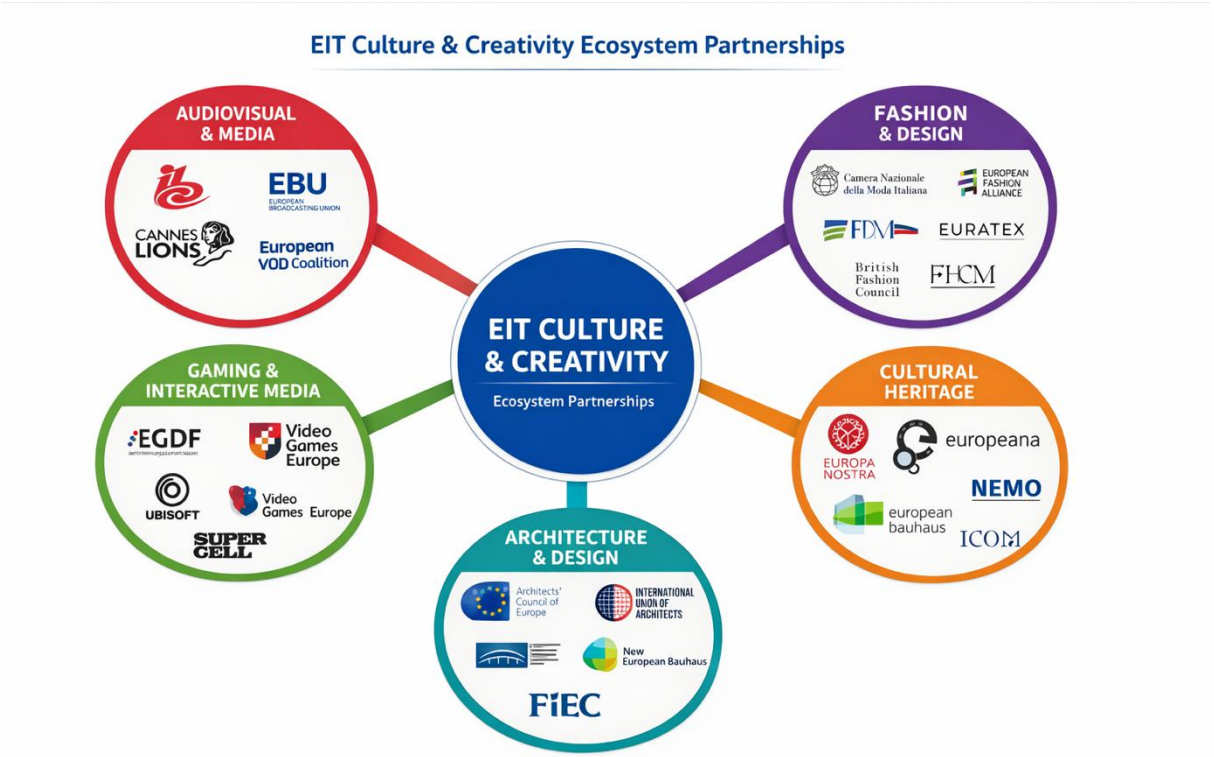
**Strategic Value for the KIC**

Through this sector partnership architecture, EIT Culture & Creativity gains structured access to large industry ecosystems across Europe and globally, reaching hundreds of thousands of companies, professionals and institutions.

These partnerships strengthen:

- **Innovation pipelines and corporate collaboration (WP3)**
- **Regional ecosystem engagement and RIS development (WP4)**
- **Sector-wide dissemination and stakeholder mobilisation (WP7)**

By leveraging these networks, the KIC can efficiently scale programme participation, strengthen industry engagement and accelerate the market uptake of innovation emerging from Europe's cultural and creative sectors.




*Logos and brand names are used for illustrative and informational purposes only and do not imply formal partnership, endorsement, or contractual relationship unless explicitly stated*

**Stakeholder Engagement**

Stakeholder engagement will be structured to deepen partnerships, align with policy priorities, and co-create programmes. All engagement follows the **EIT Code of Conduct** and KIC governance principles, balancing **strategic priorities with geographical diversity**.

**Priority stakeholders:**

- national ministries (culture, education, economy, innovation);
- municipal and regional development agencies;
- creative SMEs, industry clusters, and associations;
- higher education and research institutions;
- investors active in cultural and creative industries;
- civil society organisations and citizen groups.

**Engagement formats:**

- **policy dialogues** at EU and national levels;
- **regional roadshows & roundtables** to anchor pilots and initiatives;
- **co-creation workshops** to design calls and education modules;
- **flagship forums** to bring together policy, industry, and academia.

**Timeline & tools:**

- **annual stakeholder mapping** to identify new strategic actors;
- **biannual ecosystem campaigns** coordinated with CLCs;
- **quarterly briefings & newsletters** via CRM and partner portal;
- **targeted dialogues** aligned with EU funding calls and innovation agendas.

**Impact goal:** By 2028, EIT Culture & Creativity will:

- secure **50% co-financing** in societal transformation pilots;
- establish **5+ long-term PPPs** with external funders and family offices;
- position itself as a **trusted advisor to policymakers** on cultural innovation.

**Stakeholders and Engagement Mechanisms**

**a) Relevant Stakeholder Groups**

- policymakers at EU, national, regional, and local levels;
- industry representatives across CCSI value chains;
- investors (VCs, family offices, foundations, corporate investors);
- standardisation bodies and regulatory authorities;
- national and regional administrations;
- education and research institutions;
- cultural institutions, civil society, and citizen organisations.

**b) Engagement Mechanisms**

- Strategic Topic Groups (STGs) as primary vehicles for structured stakeholder dialogue;
- place-based engagement in RIS regions through pilots and matchmaking;
- EU-level events, fora, and policy dialogues;
- bilateral cooperation with EC DGs and European Partnerships;
- continuous engagement via the Digital Hub;
- business creation instruments for startups and SMEs;
- EIT-labelled education programmes for skills development.

Partners act as regional multipliers and thematic leaders, supporting STGs, education, business creation, dissemination, and local stakeholder engagement.

**Cooperation with European Partnerships and EC DGs**

Resilient Cultural Heritage Partnership (RCHP)

Opportunities include:

- joint calls on heritage digitalisation, climate resilience, and sustainable materials;
- shared pilots in RIS regions (e.g. heritage districts as living labs);
- cross-participation in STGs and strategic agenda alignment;
- joint education and training modules (risk assessment, digital twins, conservation technologies);
- co-investment pathways linking RCHP research outputs with EIT Culture & Creativity business creation mechanisms;
- integration of RCHP outputs into the Digital Hub and European ecosystem mapping.

Cooperation with EC Directorates-General

- **DG EAC:** cultural policy dialogues, skills frameworks, and creative entrepreneurship, NEB-aligned actions (particularly in relation with the Culture Compass);
- **DG CNECT:** media innovation, data spaces, and digital content ecosystems;
- **DG RTD:** alignment with Horizon Europe, innovation uptake, and foresight;
- **DG REGIO:** integration into regional development and transformation strategies;
- **DG GROW:** design, fashion, crafts, and SME competitiveness;
- **DG CLIMA & DG ENV:** climate-resilient heritage, circular creative value chains;
- **DG EMPL:** skills, inclusion, and fair working conditions for CCSI professionals;
- **DG ENV:** NEB aligned actions on circularity and sustainable urban transformation and fashion.

Cooperation with the JRC at the Commission

- NEB unit: operationalising the NEB Innovation Pathways, from Knowledge to Innovation to Capacity Building;
- EU Policy Lab: intergenerational fairness and transformative policy through and for the CCSI.

Cross-cutting synergies include policy coordination, joint events, shared data frameworks, and investment alignment.

Cooperation with other KICs

Cooperation with other KICs (e.g. 28Digital) will be operationalised through targeted joint actions, knowledge exchange and, where relevant, coordinated calls, particularly in areas of shared interest such as digital skills, AI deployment and innovation ecosystems.

**Dissemination and Exploitation**

Dissemination and exploitation ensure results are **shared, scaled, and sustained** across Europe. The strategy is **proportional to the activity scale** while consistent across the portfolio.

**Dissemination objectives:**

- share results, best practices, and lessons learned to boost uptake by the European and global innovation community;

- Provide **open access** to publications, datasets, and models via the EIT website, Horizon Results Platform, OpenAIRE, and EU Science Hub;
- Translate results into **accessible formats** (policy briefs, use cases, toolkits, explainer videos).

**Exploitation routes:**

- **commercialisation of prototypes** from WP1 Innovation;
- **scaling of venture support models** from WP3 Business Creation;
- **integration of education formats** into mainstream curricula via WP2 Education;
- **policy uptake** of recommendations from WP9 Transformation & New European Bauhaus (NEB).

**Expected exploitable results:**

- IP-generating prototypes and new services;
- tested venture acceleration models;
- EIT-labelled curricula and training templates;
- toolkits for stakeholder engagement and cultural transformation.

**Monitoring & updates:**

- dissemination plan updated annually with results and lessons learned;
- **30+ case studies and toolkits** published by 2028;
- **100% of projects** required to upload results to EU-approved repositories;
- **10+ success stories promoted annually** through EIT and EU channels.

### OPTIMISATION OF REGIONAL COST STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE MATURITY

The Co-Location Centre (CLC) network of EIT Culture & Creativity plays a central role in activating regional ecosystems and connecting the KIC to industry, research and innovation actors across Europe. During the establishment phase, the CLCs enabled rapid partner mobilisation, regional visibility, and the development of strong local networks across the Cultural and Creative Sectors and Industries (CCSI).

As the KIC moves from establishment to scaling, EIT Culture & Creativity is refining the operational model of the CLC network to further strengthen its contribution to programme delivery and ecosystem growth. The regional hubs will increasingly focus on **business development, partnership growth and retention, investor outreach, and ecosystem events**, ensuring strong regional engagement and continuous pipeline generation for the KIC's programmes.

These activities directly support the implementation of the KIC's **Business Creation and Innovation activities (WP3 and WP4)** by identifying high-potential startups, SMEs and scale-ups, facilitating access to regional innovation ecosystems, and strengthening links with investors and industry partners. In addition, the regional hubs contribute to **Education and Skills activities (WP2)** through engagement with universities and training providers, and to **Communication and Stakeholder Engagement (WP7)** through regional events, sector outreach and partner community development.

Several CLCs also host staff members who contribute directly to the implementation of specific **Work Package activities**, bringing valuable sector expertise and proximity to regional stakeholders. This distributed capability supports beneficiary engagement, strengthens programme delivery, and enhances the quality of project pipelines entering the KIC's programmes.

To further improve operational coherence and governance maturity, EIT Culture & Creativity will gradually evolve the CLC structure towards **lean, capability-driven Regional Growth & Partnership Hubs**. In this model, **EIT CC GmbH will strengthen centralised governance, financial management, compliance oversight and performance monitoring**, while the regional hubs focus on **ecosystem mobilisation, partnership development and beneficiary support**.

The transition will be implemented in a phased manner to ensure continuity of programme delivery. Capability mapping across the network will guide the allocation of expertise and implementation roles, ensuring that excellence and performance determine programme contributions across regions. Harmonised reporting structures, service-level agreements and standardised compliance procedures will ensure consistent programme implementation across all regions.

In parallel, the KIC will leverage **cross-KIC collaboration and shared infrastructures** in selected markets to further extend geographic reach and strengthen ecosystem connectivity, particularly in emerging and underrepresented innovation ecosystems.

Overall, the evolution of the regional model reflects the **governance maturation of EIT Culture & Creativity** as it moves from establishment to large-scale programme implementation. The strengthened alignment between central governance and regional ecosystem engagement ensures efficient programme delivery while reinforcing the KIC's pan-European innovation network.

### 2.3 Expected Impact of the Activities for 2026–2028 under the Regional Innovation Scheme (EIT RIS)

The **EIT RIS strategy embedded in this Business Plan** plays a central role in delivering **territorial cohesion, innovation diffusion, and inclusive participation** across Europe's cultural and creative sectors. EIT Culture & Creativity adopts a **systemic RIS approach** that goes beyond outreach to enable lasting **structural impact** in regions with modest or moderate innovation capacity.

All activities under the RIS framework are fully aligned with the **EIT Strategic Agenda 2021–2027** and the KIC's own RIS strategy, which prioritises the following:

- **decentralisation** of innovation opportunities;
- **capacity-building** for regions with lower participation in European R&I programmes;
- **integration** of RIS partners into national and regional innovation ecosystems.

**Rationale for RIS Activities**

The selection of RIS activities is based on a **comprehensive mapping exercise** that looks at:

- gaps in CCSI innovation infrastructure;
- regional Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3);
- ecosystem needs identified through prior **roadshows and co-design sessions**.

As a result, the 2026-2028 RIS programme focuses on three **strategic fronts**:

1. **strengthening local partner engagement** through roadmaps and dedicated onboarding of regional actors;
2. **deploying place-based business creation and education pipelines**, adapted to local capacities and languages;
3. **aligning innovation pilots with national and regional development priorities** to maximise uptake and co-financing opportunities.

**Contribution to Knowledge Triangle Integration (KTI)**

RIS activities reinforce **synergies across Education, Research, and Business Creation**:

- **education:** expansion of **EIT-labelled Master's and professional programmes** in RIS countries, co-designed with local HEIs and cultural institutions;
- **business creation:** tailored support for startups and SMEs, including mentorship in local languages, access to public cultural venues, and IP/legal advisory adapted to regional needs;
- **innovation pilots:** pilots embedded in **regional clusters and cultural institutions**, with demonstrators designed for both commercial and policy uptake;
- **Scaling:** RIS entities participate in **cross-border consortia** to scale tested models across multiple RIS countries.

**Measurable Impact 2026-2028**

The expected results of RIS activities are defined through **SMART targets**:

- **venture creation:** RIS entities will represent **≥25% of all new ventures** supported by the KIC, a **15% increase over the 2024–2025 baseline**;
- **innovation pilots:** at least **8 pilots implemented**, of which **≥5 will progress to commercial uptake or policy integration** by 2028;
- **partnership growth: ≥40 new partners** from RIS countries onboarded, including HEIs, innovation intermediaries, and public actors;
- **education reach:** all RIS regions involved in **tailored training programmes**, with at least **1,500 learners trained** through RIS-linked education offers by 2028;
- **regional roadmaps:** country-specific roadmaps in all engaged RIS countries to guide stakeholder mobilisation, investment, and S3 alignment.

**Contribution to Financial Sustainability**

RIS activities will actively support the KIC's Financial Sustainability strategy:

- **revenue generation:** localised offerings (fee-based training, municipal co-funded pilots, venture support services) are expected to generate **EUR 1.5 million in direct revenues** 2026-2028;
- **co-financing:** by 2028, **≥20% of the RIS budget** will be covered by **non-EIT sources**, including municipal contributions, European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) funds, and private sponsorship;
- **structural funds alignment:** RIS partners will help mobilise EU structural funds (ERDF, Creative Europe, Horizon Europe partnerships) to sustain activities beyond the EIT funding horizon.

**Long-Term Impact**

Through the RIS framework, EIT Culture & Creativity is building a **decentralised yet integrated innovation architecture** that embeds cultural and creative innovation into regional ecosystems. This structure will:

- ensure **equitable participation** of modest/moderate innovation regions in pan-European innovation;
- create **replicable models** for regional transformation through culture-driven pilots;
- lay the foundation for RIS actors to remain central in the KIC's **2028–2034 strategy**, ensuring the benefits of cultural innovation extend to **all European regions**.

## 3. Quality and Efficiency of Implementation

### 3.1. Work Plan and Resources

The **Business Plan 2026-2028** builds upon the previous portfolio structure and introduces an updated configuration of **nine Work Packages (WPs)**, fully aligned with the **Strategic Agenda 2024–2027** and the evolution of the KIC's operational model. The portfolio is designed to deliver impact against the three **Strategic Objectives (SOs)** of EIT Culture & Creativity

**Portfolio Structure**

The work plan is structured into **four core WPs** directly contributing to the SOs and **five horizontal WPs** enabling coherence, visibility, and sustainability:

**Core Work Packages**

- **WP1 – Innovation** (SO2: development of new products, services, and business models);
- **WP2 – Education** (SO1: EIT-labelled programmes, skills development, lifelong learning);
- **WP3 – Business Creation** (SO3: support for startups, scaleups, SMEs);
- **WP4 – Regional Innovation Scheme (RIS)** (supporting all SOs through territorial cohesion and inclusion).

**Horizontal Work Packages**

- **WP5 – Coordination** (coordination, compliance, performance monitoring, cascade funding);
- **WP6 – Communication, Stakeholder Engagement, Dissemination & Exploitation** (visibility, brand-building, EU/EIT recognition);
- **WP7 – Financial Sustainability** (revenue diversification, PPP development, NEFA mobilisation);
- **WP8 – Ecosystem Development** (partnership growth, outreach, STGs, stakeholder services);
- **WP9 – Transformation & New European Bauhaus (NEB)** (cross-sectoral pilots linking culture, design, and sustainability, contributing to 3 SOs).

This portfolio ensures that each Work Package has a **distinct role** while remaining interconnected to support the Strategic Agenda and enable cross-KIC impact and long-term sustainability.

**Cascading Funding Model and the 70/30 Ceiling**

In line with the **EIT 2026–2028 invitation** to the KICS to submit proposals for grant agreements, the **ceiling for KIC internal activities is set at 30% of the EIT grant** for the 2026–2028 period, calculated as an average across three years.

- **At least 70% of EIT funding** will cascade to third parties via the **Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP) mechanism**, ensuring inclusiveness, transparency, and competitiveness.
- **Internal activities** cover all tasks implemented by the KIC LE and affiliated entities (CLCs/Regional Hubs), regardless of type or cost category, and will remain lean and efficiency driven.
- **Horizontal WPs** (e.g. WP5-WP8) will operate with minimal internal structures, while Core WPs (WP1–WP4) will channel resources primarily via FSTP calls.

**Transition Plan into the model 30% internal costs / 70% cascade funding**

The KIC will progressively reduce the share of internal activities to an average of **≤30% across 2026–2028**. This will be achieved through the following:

- increased reliance on cascade funding, both partner-led and via open FSTP calls;
- reduced subcontracting costs and consolidation of internal functions;
- performance-based monitoring of CLCs/Regional Hubs, with restructuring if necessary.

Implementation of the cascade funding will:

- aim for a model reaching 74% of FSTP in the Business Plan, creating a buffer for FSTP implementation;
- strengthen the continuous monitoring of the activities to detect underperformance or delays and implement corrective measures;
- focus on cost compliance checks for subgrantees via CFS and internal controlling;
- implement lump sums in cascade funding, thereby mitigating the risk of ineligibility of costs for subgrantees.

This transition safeguards the ecosystem model while addressing concerns of proportionality and efficiency raised by Member States and stakeholders.

Planned efforts and resources along the three-year Business Plan (BP):

The KIC plans to increase the resources under this BP to reach a cruise level of around 65 FTEs. There is a balance between the growth of resources in:

- Programme Implementation: 1 director and 3-4 FTEs for programme management for the areas of Innovation, Business Creation, Education and Transformation & NEB;
- Outreach and Marketing: Resources for public affairs, Marketing and Comms, Business Development and all the regional and CLC network;
- Operations and Finance: including the departments Legal, Technology/IT, People and Talent, Grants and Funding, as well as Finance.

**Planned Calls and FSTP Distribution**

All WPs will implement their activities through a **balanced mix of open and targeted calls** under the FSTP mechanism:

- **Open calls** are the default mechanism, ensuring inclusiveness and transparency.
- **Partner-specific or direct awards** will be applied only when justified by strategic continuity, ecosystem anchoring, equity management, or mandatory compliance (in line with the Model Grant Agreement Annex 5).

Each WP description (Sections 3.1.1–3.1.9) specifies the **FSTP share of its budget** and provides justification where non-open calls are foreseen.

Calls in 2026 will be primarily structured around the prioritised topic areas (Audiovisual, Fashion & Architecture), while ensuring cross-sector applicability and scalability, with additional thematic integration of industry resilience, IP and AI-related challenges

***Table 3a - Overview of KIC Calls***

| WP | Task no. | Type of activity | Type of call (open, partners, direct award) | Estimated number of projects | Estimated budget (EUR) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| WP1 | 1.2 | Innovation Calls for Proposals | Open | 60 | 20 500 000 |
| WP1 | 1.4 | Open Call for financial support to late-stage startups | Open | 12 | 1 500 000 |
| WP2 | 2.3 | 2 new Master programmes, 2 Winter Schools, 1 Summer School, 18 Master/PhD modules, plus scholarships: 14 for EU Master's students and 5 for non-EU Masters | Open/ Targeted Call | 23 | 8 078 400 |
| WP2 | 2.4 | 24 EIT-Labelled CPD Courses; 18 CPD Skills-based Courses; 12 EIT-labelled Transversal Skills Courses | Open/ Targeted Call | 54 | 11 342 400 |
| WP3 | 3.1.3 | Permanently Open Call for Financial Support to Startups & Scale-Ups (programme in three stages) | Open | 150 | 13 000 000 |
| WP3 | 3.3 | Post-Programme Support (100-To-Watch) | Open | 100 | 1 700 000 |
| WP4 | 4.2 | RIS-Hub | Partners | 6 | 300 000 |
| WP4 | 4.3.1 | RIS & Knowledge Triangle: Education calls Academy of Creative Entrepreneurship & Life-long Learning Pathways | Open | 14 | 2 500 000 |
| WP4 | 4.3.2 | RIS & Knowledge Triangle: Innovation calls and Scale+ Venture Growth & Scaling Calls | Open | 11 | 5 000 000 |
| WP4 | 4.3.3 | RIS & Knowledge Triangle: Business Creation calls Creative Hackathons, Venture Builder Calls & Scale Support Model | Open | 42 | 2 500 000 |
| WP4 | 4.5 | Regional Innovation Booster (RIB) | Open | 5 | 5 000 000 |
| WP8 | 8.5 | Strategic Topic Groups | Partners | 15 | 2 250 000 |
| WP9 | 9.2.1 | NEB Systemic Narratives | Open | 5 | 7 650 000 |
| WP9 | 9.3.2 | NEB Fashion Shift | Open | 5 | 4 250 000 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| WP9 | 9.3.3 | NEB Academy (capacity building) | Open | 17 | 8 500 000 |
| WP9 | 9.3.4 | Resilience Roadmaps | Open | 10 | 1 275 000 |
| WP9 | 9.3.5 | Cities & Regions Network | Open | 10 | 1 700 000 |
| **TOTAL** | | | | | **97 045 800** |

### Resource Allocation and FSTP Share

The allocation of the EIT grant between internal activities and FSTP will be proportional to the impact expected per WP, with an average FSTP share designed to stay within the thresholds defined by the EIT. Co-funding and leverage from other sources (including Non-EIT Funded Activities (NEFA)) will complement these allocations.

***Table 3b - Overview of FSTP Share per WP***

| WP | Budgeted EIT grant for internal activities (EUR) | Budgeted EIT grant for FSTP (EUR) | Total EIT budget (EUR) | Total budget including co-funding (EUR) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **WP1** | 2 329 262 | 22 000 000 | 24 329 262 | 32 029 262 |
| **WP2** | 4 365 130 | 19 420 800 | 23 785 930 | 27 670 090 |
| **WP3** | 2 353 940 | 14 700 000 | 17 053 940 | 17 053 940 |
| **WP4** | 325 590 | 15 300 000 | 15 625 590 | 18 685 590 |
| **WP5** | 6 106 382 | € - | 6 106 381 | 6 106 382 |
| **WP6** | 6 104 967 | € - | 6 104 967 | 6 104 967 |
| **WP7** | 3 761 138 | € - | 3 761 138 | 3 761 138 |
| **WP8** | 4 432 656 | 2 250 000 | 6 682 656 | 6 682 656 |
| **WP9** | 4 791 265 | 23 375 000 | 28 166 265 | 32 841 265 |
| **Total** | **34 570 330** | **97 045 800** | **131 616 129** | **150 935 290** |

### Annual Spending Forecast

Annual spending across WPs and cost categories has been carefully forecasted to reflect the planned activity ramp-up, resource requirements, and funding diversification objectives. The spending profile is designed for programme mobilisation and balanced across internal costs, FSTP, subcontracting, and indirect costs.

***Table 3c - Spending Overview per WP per Year (EUR)***

| | 2026 | 2027 | 2028 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **WP1** | 6 825 381 | 8 193 882 | 9 309 999 | 24 329 262 |
| **WP2** | 4 757 186 | 7 849 357 | 11 179 387 | 23 785 930 |
| **WP3** | 5 116 182 | 5 627 800 | 6 309 958 | 17 053 940 |
| **WP4** | 3 125 118 | 5 156 445 | 7 344 027 | 15 625 590 |
| **WP5** | 2 015 106 | 2 015 106 | 2 076 170 | 6 106 381 |
| **WP6** | 2 014 639 | 2 014 639 | 2 075 689 | 6 104 967 |
| **WP7** | 1 128 341 | 1 316 398 | 1 316 398 | 3 761 138 |
| **WP8** | 2.205.277 | 2 205 277 | 2 272 103 | 6 682 656 |
| **WP9** | 2.816.626 | 11 266 506 | 14 083 132 | 28 166 265 |
| **TOTAL** | **30 003 856** | **45 645 409** | **55 966 864** | **131 616 129** |

***Table 3d - Spending Overview per Cost Category per Year (EUR)***

| | 2026 | 2027 | 2028 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Personnel** | 6 508 102 | 7 375 848 | 7 809 722 | 21 693 672 |
| **Subcontracting** | 1 601 074 | 1 601 074 | 1 649 591 | 4 851 739 |
| **Purchase costs** | 686 796 | 686 796 | 707 608 | 2 081 200 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **FSTP** | 19 409 160 | 33 966 030 | 43 670 610 | 97 045 800 |
| **Indirect costs** | 1 798 724 | 2 015 661 | 2 129 332 | 5 943 718 |
| **TOTAL** | **30 003 856** | **45 645 409** | **55 966 864** | **131 616 129** |

### NEFA Strategy

The KIC's **Non-EIT Funded Activities (NEFA) strategy** is a central pillar of the Business Plan 2026–2028, ensuring both **financial resilience** and **strategic complementarities** with European and national innovation programmes. NEFAs are designed to reinforce long-term KIC missions while reducing dependency on EIT resources, in full compliance with **Annex 5 of the Model Grant Agreement, EIT NEFA Guidelines, and reporting protocols**.

**Scope and priorities:**

- **infrastructure co-investment** – leveraging national and regional funding to scale cultural innovation labs and digital platforms;
  **education pathways** – linking to Erasmus+, Horizon Europe MSCA, and national programmes to expand access to EIT-labelled and modular training;
- **strategic innovation pilots** – mobilising Creative Europe, Interreg, and philanthropic funds to co-finance systemic pilots with regional authorities;
- **RIS capacity-building** – aligning with European Structural Funds (ERDF, ESF+) to anchor cultural innovation in Smart Specialisation Strategies.

**Implementation & Governance:**

- NEFAs will be selected, tracked, and reported under a **dedicated monitoring mechanism** that ensures alignment with KIC missions, avoids overlaps with EIT-funded activities, and demonstrates additionality;
- a **portfolio approach** will be applied, combining EU programmes (Horizon Europe, Erasmus+, Creative Europe), national/regional sources, and philanthropic contributions from family offices and foundations;
- **annual reporting** will document NEFA revenues, impacts, and synergies with EIT-funded activities, ensuring transparency and compliance.

**Strategic contribution:**

The NEFA strategy reinforces the KIC's ambition to **increase financial sustainability by 2028** by diversifying revenue streams and securing long-term systemic impact. By 2028, NEFAs are expected to cover a significant share of strategic activities beyond the EIT budget, embedding cultural innovation in European policy frameworks and ensuring lasting benefits for the CCSI.

***Tables for section 3.1***

***Table 3.1a - List of Work Packages***

| Work package No | Work Package Title | Lead Participant No | Lead Participant Short Name | Person-Months | Start Month | End month |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **WP1** | Innovation | 1 | EIT CC GmbH | 180 | 1 | 36 |
| **WP2** | Education | 1 | EIT CC GmbH | 144 | 1 | 36 |
| **WP3** | Business Creation | 1 | EIT CC GmbH | 144 | 1 | 36 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **WP4** | EIT Regional Innovation Scheme (EIT RIS) | 1 | EIT CC GmbH | 18 | 1 | 36 |
| **WP5** | Coordination | 1 | EIT CC GmbH | 577 | | 36 |
| **WP6** | Communication, Share-holder's Engagement, Dis-semination and exploitation of results | 1 | EIT CC GmbH | 364 | 1 | 36 |
| **WP7** | Financial Sustainability | 1 | EIT CC GmbH | 300 | 1 | 36 |
| **WP8** | Ecosystem development | 1 | EIT CC GmbH | 354 | 1 | 36 |
| **WP9** | New European Bauhaus (NEB) | 1 | EIT CC GmbH | 241 | 1 | 36 |

***Table 3.1b - Work Packages***

| **Work package number** | **1** |
|---|---|
| **Work package title** | **INNOVATION** |

**Objectives**

This Work Package pursues ten strategic innovation objectives aligned with EIT priorities and EU strategic agendas:

1. Deliver high-impact innovation portfolios aligned with EU priorities, including the EU Competitiveness Compass and AI Continent Action Plan, strengthening Europe's technological sovereignty and competitiveness. (EITHE05.1, EITHE08.1)
2. Support market-ready innovations (TRL 7–9) progressing from CRL 3–4 to CRL 5, backed by robust portfolio-level IP strategies and clear commercial pathways. (EITHE05.1, EITHE02.1, EITHE03.1)
3. Contribute to EIT and KIC KPIs through measurable, scalable results. (EITHE02.1, EITHE03.1, EITHE05.1)
4. Apply improved and flexible funding tools (SAFE agreements, revenue/IP sharing, CLAs, quasi-equity) to ensure long-term Financial Sustainability. (EITHE07.1)
5. Ensure a balanced mix of incremental and breakthrough innovations through tailored call design and portfolio management. (EITHE05.1)
6. Launch structured annual Innovation Calls with a two-step process and tailored support mechanisms. (EITHE02.1, EITHE03.1, EITHE08.1, EITHE09.1)
7. Implement post-funding monitoring, milestone reviews, and a learning feedback loop for accountability and continuous improvement. (EITHE06.1, EITHE05.1)
8. Integrate gender and diversity into innovation content and portfolio design, ensuring equitable participation and gender-sensitive innovation outcomes. (EITHE08.1, EITHE09.1)
9. Strengthen synergies across Innovation, Business Creation, and Education through coordinated pipelines and cross-WP integration. (EITHE08.1, EITHE09.1)
10. Enable scaling through international outreach, Demo Days, and the Innovation Forum to maximise EU/global impact. (EITHE04.1, EITHE05.1, EITHE08.1)

90% of the EUR 24.3 million budget is distributed via FSTP to ensure openness and inclusivity. Calls will prioritise high-potential CCSI subsectors: fashion, architecture, audio-visual media, gaming, and cross-sector AI applications.

**Description of work (tasks, lead partner, participants)**

**Task 1.1 – Project Management:** ensures rigorous monitoring, learning feedback loops, and FS portfolio tracking.

**Lead**: EIT CC GmbH & CLCs | **Duration**: M1–M36 | **Budget**: EUR 2 229 262 | **FSTP**: No | **Cascade %**: 0%

- Manage portfolio delivery, KPI/milestone tracking, risk management, and alignment with EU strategic priorities;
- Provide legal, financial, and administrative support to beneficiaries;
- **Task 1.1.1 – FSM Setup & Management**: ensure ROI mechanisms for all Stage 2 projects (equity, SAFE, royalties, revenue sharing). Track contributions to FS portfolio;
- **Task 1.1.2 – Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning**: apply milestone-based go/no-go reviews. Discontinue underperforming projects and integrate lessons learned into subsequent calls.

**Task 1.2 – Innovation Calls:** deploy a two-stage funnel (Stage 1 early validation, Stage 2 scale-up funding) with prioritisation of CCSI subsectors aligned to EU priorities

**Lead**: EIT CC GmbH & CLCs | **Duration**: M1–M36 | **Budget**: EUR 20 500 000 | **FSTP**: Yes | **Cascade %**: 100%

- **Funding Structure**: two-stage funnel to support creative industry projects from prototype to market readiness;
- **Support for Applicants**: matchmaking support prior to calls to build strong projects and consortia;
- **Grant Model**: lump-sum grants linked to deliverables/milestones, reducing administrative burden.

**Stage 1 (EUR 50 000 grants):** 30 early-stage projects/year. Expected outcomes: validated business plan, IP strategy, prototype feasibility, and market demand evidence.

**Stage 2 (EUR 900 000 average grant/project):**

- 10 projects/year starting in 2027 because of the funnelling of Stage 1
- EUR5M ringfenced for AI-driven CCSI innovations.
- Expected outcomes: market-ready product/service, revenue generation, investor-ready pipeline.

**Priority Sectors**

- Audio-Visual Media (2026)
- Fashion & Textiles (2026)
- Gaming & Interactive Media (2027 & 2028)
- Architecture & Built Environment (2026)
- Cross-sector AI-enabled CCSI innovations

**Gender & Diversity**

- gender dimension integrated into proposal evaluation and portfolio design;
- portfolio reviews assess participation, corrective measures applied if gaps are identified;
- as per the Gender Mainstreaming policy, the WP is aligned with the objective of 35% woman-led startups

**Task 1.3 – Innovation Forum:** showcases top projects, increasing visibility, partnerships, and international scaling.

**Lead**: EIT CC GmbH & CLCs | **Duration**: M1–M36 | **Budget**: EUR 100 000 | **FSTP**: No | **Cascade %**: 0%

- annual showcase of top funded projects;
- foster cross-sector networking, increase visibility, and connect innovations to EU/global markets;
- up to 5 projects per call invited to present at the Forum.

**Financial Sustainability Mechanism (FSM):** all Stage 2 projects must commit to return mechanisms ensuring ROI for the KIC.

- instruments include SAFE agreements, equity options, IP royalty shares, or revenue-sharing agreements;
- instruments tailored to each project's business model and legal context;
- commitments centrally tracked as part of the KIC FS portfolio;
- returns reinvested into innovation activities, aligning with EIT FS strategy.

**Intellectual Property (IPR) Strategy:** a portfolio-level IPR framework governs results management, protection, and exploitation:

- **protection measures**: patents, design rights, copyright, trademarks;
- **exploitation pathways**: registration, licensing, revenue-sharing, and commercialisation;
- **integration**: IP strategies developed at Stage 1; Stage 2 projects must comply with KIC IPR Policy;
- **monitoring**: centralised IPR tracking ensures alignment with FS and exploitation goals.

**Task 1.4 – Scale+:** Scaling & Market Deployment

**Lead**: EIT CC GmbH & CLCs | **Duration**: M1–M36 | **Budget**: EUR 1 500 000 | **FSTP**: Yes | **Cascade %**: 100%

- **Scale+ Programme**: supports late-stage startups/scaleups to become EU/global champions;
- **Market Access Tools**: Demo Days, Innovation Forum, corporate/investor matchmaking;
- **Geographic Reach**: strong internationalisation to boost EU competitiveness;
- **Synergies**: funnel successful innovations into Business Creation pipelines for further growth;
- **Starting** in 2028 because of funnelling the Stage 2 projects from the Innovation call.

**Impact Pathway:** WP1 Innovation is designed to maximise impact at portfolio level, ensuring measurable contributions to EIT Core KPIs, KIC-specific KPIs, and EU strategic agendas. The pathway from objectives to outcomes to impact is structured as follows:

**Inputs**

- EUR 24.3 million budget (90% distributed via FSTP), dedicated to inclusive, transparent Innovation Calls;
- structured support mechanisms (matchmaking, coaching, milestone reviews);
- financial sustainability instruments (SAFE, equity, IP royalties, revenue sharing).

**Outputs**

- ~150 startups supported at early stage (Stage 1);
- 20–25 scale-ups supported to reach market readiness (Stage 2);
- 25–30 new/improved products and services launched on the EU/global market;
- 400+ organisations engaged, with ≥35% from RIS regions;
- 100% of projects undergo post-funding monitoring and evaluation.

**Outcomes**

- Accelerated commercialisation of innovations in high-potential sectors (fashion, architecture, audio-visual, gaming, AI applications);
- Strengthened IP strategies at portfolio level, ensuring sustainable exploitation pathways;
- Balanced mix of incremental and breakthrough innovations, maximising portfolio resilience;
- Enhanced gender integration into innovation content and portfolio design;
- Increased cross-KIC synergies between innovation, education, and business creation activities.

**Impact (Alignment with EU Priorities)**

- **EU Competitiveness Compass**: WP1 directly strengthens Europe's competitiveness by scaling high-potential creative innovations, improving productivity in CCSI, and contributing to the EU's twin green and digital transition;
- **AI Continent Action Plan**: EUR 5 million ringfenced for AI-enabled CCSI innovations positions Europe as a global leader in responsible, human-centric AI applications in culture and creativity;
- **EU Gender Equality Strategy**: active integration of gender dimension into project design and portfolio evaluation promotes inclusive innovation;
- **EIT Strategic Agenda 2021–2027**: WP1 contributes to financial sustainability, broadening participation from RIS, and delivering measurable innovation-driven societal impact.

This pathway ensures that innovation outcomes are not only delivered but scaled across European and global markets, maximising the long-term impact of EIT investments while reinforcing the EU's competitiveness, sovereignty, and societal resilience

| Work package number | 2 |
|---|---|
| Work package title | EDUCATION |

**Objectives**

This Work Package delivers a coordinated education portfolio to equip Europe's Cultural and Creative Sectors and Industries (CCSI) with entrepreneurial, digital, and green competences, boosting adaptability, employability, and innovation capacity. Aligned with EIT priorities and the EIT Culture & Creativity Strategic Agenda 2024–2027, the WP has the following objectives:

- expand interdisciplinary, inclusive, and market-responsive programmes that respond to evolving sector needs. (EITHE01.1, EITHE08.1, EITHE09.1);
- embed Financial Sustainability through viable business models and revenue-sharing mechanisms. (EITHE07.1);
- link education directly to Business Creation and Innovation pipelines for seamless Knowledge Triangle Integration (KTI). (EITHE01.1, EITHE08.1, EITHE09.1);
- position the WP as both an entry and progression point for talent, enabling learners to move from education into venture development, market testing, and scaling - and allowing entrepreneurs from other WPs to return for targeted upskilling. (EITHE01.1, EITHE03.1, EITHE08.1);
- provide a KIC-wide online learning platform (ACE) to enable the digital delivery of training and courses across multiple Work Packages. (EITHE01.1, EITHE07.1, EITHE08.1).

A minimum of 75% of funding (81% planned) supports EIT-labelled portfolio activities. Calls will enable universities, training providers, and industry consortia to address CCSI skills gaps in AI, green/digital transformation, and creative entrepreneurship; foster sustainable design and craftsmanship; and provide flexible, modular training aligned with industry needs to accelerate innovation uptake. The WP budget is EUR 23.7 million, with EUR 19.4 million (82%) distributed as FSTP. Financial Sustainability will start with revenue-sharing models, expanding to additional mechanisms and market-driven delivery from 2028.

All Education Activities will be integrated under the EIT Campus

## DESCRIPTION OF WORK

### Task 2.1 - WP Management and Coordination

**Lead:** EIT CC GmbH | **Duration:** M1-M36 | **Budget:** EUR 1 785 930| **FSTP:** No | **Cascade %:** 0%

Provide strategic leadership, operational oversight, and Financial Sustainability for the Education WP, ensuring alignment with EIT Culture & Creativity priorities, quality standards, and the KTI model. Outcomes from this task inform all other WPs, ensuring that Education remains tightly linked to entrepreneurship (WP3) and innovation activities (WP1). This Task has the following objectives:

- Manage all operational aspects of the WP, from partner coordination to milestone tracking.
- Ensure harmonised communication with the EIT and internal stakeholders, integrating Education planning into the KIC's broader objectives. This includes regular Education team meetings, alignment of timelines, and early identification of risks to delivery.

**Task 2.1.1 - FSM Setup & Management; Reinvestment of Non-EIT Funding:** This Task has the following objectives:

- establish and operate a robust Financial Sustainability Mechanism for Education activities;
- set up the necessary systems to track and manage income and ensure long-term viability.

The FSM will combine B2C revenue-sharing, tuition-based income, and royalty-free licences, ensuring post-funding delivery of all programmes for a minimum of three years. All revenues generated will be strategically reinvested into new courses, platform improvements, and alumni initiatives to expand impact.

**Task 2.1.2 - Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning (MEL)**. This Task has the following objective:

- Design and implement a robust MEL framework for EIT Culture & Creativity's Education area to systematically track progress, assess impact, and foster continuous improvement across all programmes.

The outcome will be an operational MEL framework providing evidence-based insights, enhancing accountability, and driving continuous learning.

**Task 2.1.3 - Updated Market Analysis:** in 2026, an in-depth analysis of evolving CCSI skills demands, emerging technologies, and stakeholder priorities, will be conducted, with annual updates until 2028. Insights will shape call topics, guide curriculum design, and identify high-potential revenue opportunities.

### Task 2.2 - Academy for Creative Entrepreneurship (ACE) Learning Platform

**Lead:** EIT CC GmbH & CLCs | **Duration:** M1-M36 | **Budget:** EUR 800 000| **FSTP:** No | **Cascade%:** 0%

The ACE acts as the central hub for delivering high-quality degree, non-degree programmes & training, combining digital accessibility with market responsiveness. Learners can seamlessly transition between ACE programmes and trainings that are offered, ensuring continuous development within the KIC pipeline.

**Task 2.2.1 - Building a Smart, Inclusive Learning Ecosystem.** This Task has the following objectives:

- develop and operate an accessible online platform supporting live, digital, and blended learning formats;
- integrate AI-powered translation tools to increase participation from RIS and non-EU regions, tackling geographical and language barriers while promoting inclusive learning.

**Task 2.2.2 - Designing Future-Ready Skills Pathways:** co-design masterclasses, workshops, and training with CLCs to address local market needs and sectoral skills gaps, prioritising AI, XR, sustainability, and entrepreneurship.

**Task 2.2.3 - Powering Sustainability Through Innovation and Partnership:** the ACE will explore B2B and B2C revenue models and form strategic partnerships to secure long-term financial sustainability and build an innovative workforce.

### Task 2.3 Degree Education Portfolio

**Lead:** EIT CC GmbH | **Duration:** M1-M36 | **Budget:** EUR 8 200 000 | **FSTP:** Yes | **Cascade %:** 99%

The WP will deliver EIT-labelled degree-level programmes to produce entrepreneurial, innovation-ready graduates who will drive transformation in the CCSI. Students will be supported to turn academic projects into business ventures (WP3) or innovation pilots (WP1).

**Task 2.3.1 - Master's Programmes** Two double-degree Master's programmes will launch by 2028, co-designed with industry and academic partners. The programmes will offer interdisciplinary curricula, combining creative-sector knowledge with entrepreneurship, innovation, and leadership skills.

**Task 2.3.2 - Master's or PhD Modules**: 18 EIT-labelled modules will be embedded into existing HEI programmes to meet urgent skills demands in AI, sustainable design, and creative entrepreneurship.

**Task 2.3.3 - Winter & Summer Schools (Bachelor level):** Three seasonal Bachelor-level schools will be run to inspire interest in CCSI careers, focusing on sustainability, digitalisation, and entrepreneurship. These initiatives will feed into advanced education and link to EIT Culture & Creativity's youth entrepreneurship actions.

**Task 2.3.4 - Master's Scholarships:** 19 scholarships will be awarded to increase access and inclusion for underrepresented groups and RIS regions.

### Task 2.4 - Non-degree Education Portfolio

**Lead:** EIT CC GmbH | **Duration:** M1-M36 | **Budget:** EUR 11 500 000 | **FSTP:** Yes | **Cascade %:** 99%

The objective of this task is to offer flexible, targeted professional training for CCSI professionals, SMEs, and micro-enterprises. Graduates from non-degree programmes can progress into WP3 venture creation or WP1 innovation activities, and vice versa.

**Task 2.4.1 - CPD Courses (EIT-Labelled & Non-Labelled):** 42 professional development courses, 24 EIT-labelled and 18 non-labelled, will be delivered. The courses cover AI, IPR, sustainability, leadership, and emerging technologies, tailored to freelancers, SMEs, and corporates.

**Task 2.4.2 - Transversal Creative Entrepreneurship Courses:** 12 EIT-labelled transversal courses will be run for professionals and jobseekers across the CCSI. The courses focus on creative innovation, business resilience, and market readiness, contributing to lifelong learning and Pact for Skills objectives.

**Task 2.4.3 - Capacity-building Webinars:** 5 webinar series (non-labelled) will be delivered through subcontracting by EIT CC GmbH. The sessions enhance cross-sector knowledge sharing, policy dialogue, and

collaborative upskilling aligned with the New European Bauhaus. Topics address core CCSI concerns aligned to the EIT Culture & Creativity SA.

### Task 2.5 Alumni, Outreach & Engagement

**Lead:** EIT CC GmbH & CLCs | **Duration:** M1-M36 | **Budget:** EUR 1 500 000| **FSTP:** No| **Cascade%:** 0%
This task will build and maintain a self-sustaining alumni community that drives cross-WP collaboration, mentorship, and sector leadership. Alumni remain active contributors, mentoring participants in WP1 and WP3, and re-engaging in education for ongoing skill development.
**Task 2.5.1 - EIT Culture & Creativity Alumni:** the EIT Culture & Creativity Alumni Programme will integrate into EIT Culture & Creativity's Digital Hub by 2026, with a growing offering over the 3-year BP, featuring peer mentoring, matchmaking events, and exclusive services for alumni. By 2028, 3 000 engaged users are projected across different metrics (e.g. communication engagement, experiential engagement, career service engagement, volunteer engagement).
**Task 2.5.2 - Growth Pipeline:** annual pitching competitions and student challenges will be organised, along with innovation masterclasses, to support promising graduates and build business, innovation, and strategic skills.
**Task 2.5.3 - Marketing & Stakeholder Engagement:** develop and deploy ACE brand strategy to maximise visibility and impact through targeted campaigns, event branding, and consistent messaging.

**Integration Education Activities:**
EIT Culture & Creativity (EIT Culture & Creativity) maintains a clear commitment to integrating all relevant educational outputs under the EIT Campus initiative by leveraging the Academy for Creative Entrepreneurship (ACE) Learning Platform and ensuring rigorous quality standards.

**Overarching Commitment and Integration:**
The EIT Campus, the commitment covers the entire educational portfolio (WP2). It features:

1. A centralised structure: EIT Culture & Creativity establishes the ACE learning platform as the strategic activity to coordinate and oversee all education and training courses, aiming for independence and specific branding by 2026.
2. Digital delivery and quality: the ACE Learning Platform serves as the central hub for delivering high-quality degree, non-degree, CPD, and NEB-aligned programmes and training. All EIT-labelled diplomas and certificates produced across the KIC prominently carry EIT branding.

**Business potential and market analysis:**

The business potential and market analysis for the Education Work Package (WP2) activities occurred before the comprehensive market research analysis in 2026. They were established and validated by aligning with the Strategic Agenda (SA) 2024–2027, sector studies, partner consultations, and benchmarking against other KIC organisations.

Strategic Agenda and Market Justification (Pre-2026)

The EIT Culture & Creativity's Education strategy (SO1) addresses Challenge 1: Lack of appropriate skills for future job markets. The SA confirms that despite high creative talent, many professionals lack the necessary skills for the green and digital transition.

Educational activities focus on five priority areas: Fashion, Architecture, Cultural Heritage, Audiovisual Media, and Gaming. These areas face unique challenges and represent a significant share of the EU CCSI workforce and revenue. For example, Gaming (C1) faces challenges in accessing talent, necessitating strict industry curricula and synergies with technology studies.
The course prioritises in-demand skills like AI, sustainability, IP, and creative entrepreneurship to accelerate innovation and address market gaps.

Business Potential and Financial Sustainability
The activities are selected for their business potential and long-term financial sustainability through diversified revenue streams.

WP2 aims to generate EUR 0.6 million education revenues by 2028 through education-related revenues, such as tuition fees. Additional revenues could be obtained from other sources, including licensing programmes.

The educational strategy targets professionals, SMEs, and large enterprises, tailoring fee-based CPD courses to their specific skills challenges.

The ACE Learning Platform explores B2B and B2C revenue models, securing long-term financial sustainability through strategic partnerships.

Partner Consultations and EIT Label Benchmarking
The design of education programmes relies on existing partner knowledge and external validation frameworks.

EIT Label Requirements: All EIT-labelled Master's, PhD, and CPD courses must apply for the EIT Label within their first year of funding. The EIT Label process requires co-designing among industry and academic beneficiaries to ensure market responsiveness and produce innovation-ready graduates.

Benchmarking EIT KICs: EIT Culture & Creativity's education FS strategy, including revenue share models based on tuition/course fees, follows the business model of successful KICs. Education Managers with relevant experience from other KICs are used for tuition fee collection, ensuring the model's feasibility. The revenue model sets the share of tuition fees allocated to EIT Culture & Creativity.

Risk Mitigation: Initial revenue estimates are based on preliminary negotiations and confirmed upon final Grant Agreement. This cautious, staged approach to financial planning precedes the full 2026 market analysis.

KPI Breakdown by Education Programme Area

| Education Programme Area | Corresponding Task | FSTP budget (EUR) | KPI breakdown (cumulative 2026–28) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Degree Portfolio | Task 2.3 | 8 078 400 | **EITHE07.1:** 360<br>**EITHE08.1:** 820 |
| CPD (non-degree) Portfolio | Task 2.4 | 11 342 400 | **EITHE07.1:** 3 850<br>**EITHE08.1:** 22 580 |

EITHE07.2 and EITHE08.2 goals are 30% of EITHE07.1 and EITHE08.1. No fellowships are foreseen during this BP cycle.

The Financial Sustainability model for Education relies on these activities generating revenues from **tuition-based income** and **sale of non-degree professional development courses** through the ACE Learning Platform, expected to contribute **EUR 0.6 million** in accumulated revenue by 2028.

The budget allocations are inextricably linked to the calls (Task 2.3 and 2.4). Any necessary updates to the calls or content will be guided by the **in-depth market analysis** scheduled to be conducted in 2026

- As per the Gender Mainstreaming policy, the WP is aligned with the objective of 40% woman in education

| **Work package number** | **3** |
|---|---|
| **Work package title** | **BUSINESS CREATION** |

**Objectives**

This Work Package has the following objectives:

- create, grow, and scale 650 CCSI ventures by 2028, including 30+ new ventures, contributing to EIT KPIs on startups established (EITHE02.1) and startups supported (EITHE03.1);
- attract EUR 10 million+ in external investment by 2028 through financial readiness support, post-programme services, and a 250+ member investor network, including at least one new tailored funding instrument, contributing to EIT KPI on external investment attracted by supported startups (EITHE04.1);
- address key barriers identified in the EU Startup & Scaleup Strategy (2025) and sector-specific challenges, including fragmented markets, limited access to finance, and the underrepresentation of women-led ventures and female investors, contributing to diversity-related KPIs (EITHE09.1);
- embed NEB principles of sustainability, inclusivity, and aesthetics into supported venture models and innovation pathways, contributing to EIT KPI on the number of supported ventures integrating NEB principles (EITHE11.1);
- ensure long-term Financial Sustainability through equity/quasi-equity agreements (e.g. SAFE) with 75+ ventures, alongside revenue from corporate services, sponsorships, and ticket sales, contributing to the Financial Sustainability KPI (EITHE07.1);

- Strengthen cross-pillar integration with Education (WP2) and Innovation (WP1) to ensure a robust, diverse venture pipeline and improved investment readiness, contributing to cross-pillar KPI targets (EITHE08.1).

As per the gender mainstreaming Policy, the WP is aligned with the goal of 35% women-led startups.
A EUR 17 million budget will fund a pan-European venture creation and scaling pipeline through Spark, Shape, and Scale programmes. The remaining 14% covers coordination, portfolio management, and capacity building.

## DESCRIPTION OF WORK

- **Pan-European Pipeline for CCSI Sector**: builds a pipeline for business creation, growth, and scaling in the CCSI sector, addressing barriers like limited finance access and fragmented markets;
- **Support Model and Activities**: offers a three-stage support model (Spark, Shape, Scale) with post-programme support, aligning with EU instruments and integrating NEB principles;
- **Financial Sustainability and Investment:** ensures financial sustainability through equity agreements and leverages its network to channel capital into high-potential creative enterprises.

### Task 3.1 - Coordination and Management

**Lead:** EIT Culture & Creativity Internal Team | **Duration:** M1-M36 | **Budget:** EUR 756 065| **FSTP:** No | **Cascade %:** 0%
Oversee portfolio delivery, ensure alignment with FS strategy, and integrate Business Creation with Innovation and Education pipelines
**Task 3.1.1 - FSM Setup and Management:** The task involves managing Financial Support Mechanisms (FSMs) like equity and quasi-equity, aiming to reduce grant reliance and generate revenue through equity-based returns, corporate matchmaking, sponsorships, and future financial instruments.
**Task 3.1.2 - Alternative Funding & Reinvestment:** This task defines and supports the setup of legal, tax and operational frameworks for the creation of alternative funding mechanisms (WP3-Task 4), effective execution of FSM instruments and to set up a reinvestment strategy for non-EIT funding.

### Task 3.2 - Venture Building, Growth & Scaling

**Lead:** EIT CC GmbH | **Duration:** M1-M36 | **Budget:** EUR 13 657 875 | **FSTP:** Yes | **Cascade %:** 96%
The task is the main entry point for ventures at all maturity levels, aligning with startup development phases and contributing to KPIs on startups established and supported.

- *Spark*: Ideation and pre-incubation, proof of concept (POC)
- *Shape*: Incubation and prototyping a minimum viable product (MVP) or services
- *Scale*: Acceleration (scale) and internationalisation. Calls will target RIS and underrepresented creative sectors.

The CCSI pipeline addresses systemic barriers like limited finance access and fragmented markets, aligning with EU strategies and using open calls with cascade funding.
**Task 3.2.1 - Venture Building and Incubation:** EIT Culture & Creativity will launch a 12-month programme (Spark) to support new ventures and early-stage startups. The programme includes creative hackathons, a 3-month incubation phase, and a 6-month pre-seed phase with funding and tailored services.
**Task 3.2.2 - Venture Growth & Scaling:** This task bridges the "valleys of death" from MVP to scale via a Permanently Open Call for Financial Support (FSTP) to Startups and Scaleups. Ventures receive support tailored to their maturity level and progress against defined milestones:

- Shape: EUR 100 000 grants for seed investment preparation (readiness) including acceleration support and mentoring through a network of experts. Top projects can progress to Scale through Fast-Track Mechanism
- Scale: EUR 200 000 grant to support seed investment raising, market expansion, and post-acceleration. An additional EUR 200 000 grant can be unlocked (top 25% ventures) at specific milestones, such as PoC with corporate partners, access to EC instruments, or endorsement from key industry players/events.

**Task 3.2.3 - Integration of Business Creation programmes with European Commission instruments:**
EIT Culture & Creativity will strengthen the European innovation financing landscape by addressing structural early-stage funding gaps in the Cultural and Creative Sectors and Industries (CCSI). In collaboration with the **European Innovation Council Fund (EICF)**, EIT Culture & Creativity will help expand the currently underrepresented **"Social Innovation, Culture & Creative Industries"** segment, which represents less than 1% of the EICF portfolio.

Acting as a **venture pipeline and investment readiness partner**, EIT Culture & Creativity will identify, prepare and de-risk high-potential startups and scale-ups emerging from its programmes, facilitating their access to EU financing instruments. The KIC will also explore **blended finance and co-investment mechanisms** with European Commission financial instruments, including collaboration with the **European Investment Fund (EIF)**, alignment with **InvestEU policy windows**, and engagement with **national promotional banks**.

Leveraging its pan-European network of partners, regional hubs and industry clusters, EIT Culture & Creativity will aggregate **investment-ready deal flow at European scale**, reduce transaction costs for institutional investors, and mobilise additional capital into innovation segments traditionally underserved by private finance.

### Task 3.3 - Post-Programme Support

**Lead:** EIT CC GmbH | **Duration:** M1-M36 | **Budget:** EUR 1 700 000 | **FSTP:** Yes | **Cascade %:** 79%
This task provides structured post-programme support to FSM-signed ventures that have completed EIT Culture & Creativity's Business Creation programmes or received funding through an Innovation Call. Through the 100-To-Watch platform, ventures receive curated support in exchange for equity or quasi-equity agreements, across five key areas: access to funding; access to skills; access to markets; access to talent; and a quality stamp via inclusion in the 100-To-Watch list.

### Task 3.4 – Access to Finance

Lead: EIT CC GmbH | Duration: M1–M36 | Budget: EUR 200 000 | FSTP: No | Cascade %: 0%

This task strengthens the investment ecosystem for the CCSI by building an investor community, developing financing instruments, and supporting portfolio development. It also expands access to **corporate capital and venture-client partnerships** as complementary financing channels for startups and scale-ups.

**Task 3.4.1 – EIT Culture & Creativity Investment Network**
EIT Culture & Creativity will establish a dedicated investor network connecting venture capital, impact investors, corporate venture units, and institutional investors with startups emerging from EIT Culture & Creativity

programmes. Through targeted events, market intelligence, and sector research, the network will address data fragmentation in CCSI and strengthen investor confidence in the sector's growth potential.

**Task 3.4.2 – Alternative Funding Instruments**

EIT Culture & Creativity will collaborate with financial institutions and public funding bodies to explore and develop financing instruments tailored to early-stage ventures in CCSI. These may include blended finance structures, co-investment mechanisms, and revenue-sharing models designed to address structural financing gaps and mobilise additional capital into the sector.

**Task 3.4.3 – Corporate Matchmaking Services**

EIT Culture & Creativity will provide structured corporate-startup collaboration services linking startups with corporate partners through venture-client programmes, industry workshops, and innovation showcases. These collaborations support early market validation, accelerate commercial traction, and unlock additional financing opportunities while establishing a sustainable service offering for EIT Culture & Creativity.

### Task 3.5 - Marketing

**Lead:** EIT CC GmbH | **Duration:** M1-M36 | **Budget:** EUR 100 000 | **FSTP:** No | **Cascade %:** 0%

EIT Culture & Creativity's Business Creation programmes attract high-quality ventures through brand visibility, targeted outreach, and audience engagement. The goal is to position EIT Culture & Creativity as the leading European platform for CCSI startups, scaleups, and investors.

**Task 3.5.1 Always-on Pipeline Generation Campaign:**

EIT Culture & Creativity will run a year-round digital campaign promoting its Business Creation programmes to startups, scaleups, corporates, and investors.

### Task 3.6 – Flagship Initiative: IP & AI Platform

Lead: EIT CC GmbH & CLCs | Duration: M1–M36 | Budget: EUR 200 000 | FSTP: No | Cascade %: 0%

The Flagship IP/AI Platform will establish a pan-European infrastructure for IP valorisation in the CCSI. It will utilise AI and blockchain for protection, attribution, and scalable business models, increasing monetisation and creating new revenue streams.

Through flagship pilot programmes in sectors such as music, audiovisual archives, fashion, and cultural heritage, EIT Culture & Creativity will demonstrate scalable applications of the platform and create investment-ready business cases for internationalisation (EITHE08.1). A dedicated capacity-building arm will provide training in IP/AI literacy for SMEs and creators, including in RIS regions (EITHE09.1).

| Work package number | 4 |
|---|---|
| Work package title | EIT RIS |

**Objectives**

Through the Business Plan 2026–2028, the RIS activities aim to strengthen innovation capacity and societal impact in these Regions. Activities under the RIS Work Package will contribute to the following objectives:

- upskill and reskill the local workforce to equip companies, public authorities, and individuals with the skills needed to strengthen the competitiveness of the CCSI in RIS and across Europe, contributing to job creation and improved quality of life as outlined in the Union of Skills. (EITHE01.1, EITHE08.1, EITHE09.1);
- increase the innovative potential of local ecosystems and enhance connections with other stakeholders across Europe to boost the cross-territorial impact of innovation. (EITHE01.1, EITHE03.1, EITHE08.1);
- reinforce and stimulate entrepreneurship locally, increasing connections with the broader European investor network to disseminate and scale opportunities in line with the EU Startup and Scaleup Strategy. (EITHE03.1, EITHE04.1, EITHE08.1);
- develop sustainable practices and increase resilience in RIS local ecosystems. (EITHE01.1, EITHE08.1, EITHE09.1);
- attract investments and alternative sources of funding to support RIS ecosystems, with a focus on Research and Innovation Smart Specialisation Strategies (RIS3) and the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF). (EITHE07.1, EITHE08.1);
- facilitate and orchestrate activities through the six RIS Hubs to be launched in 2026, ensuring an active presence in RIS regions, supported by CLC collaboration. (EITHE08.1, EITHE09.1).

## DESCRIPTION OF WORK

### Task 4.1 - Leadership and coordination of programmes

**Lead:** EIT CC GmbH & CLCs | **Duration:** M1-M36 | **Budget:** EUR 125 590 | **FSTP:** No | **Cascade %:** 0%

Oversee RIS portfolio, coordinate RIS Hubs, ensure integration with FS strategy.

**Task 4.1.2 - FSM setup & management:**

The RIS Work Package develops Financial Sustainability Mechanisms to ensure long-term viability of RIS actions. This includes equity instruments, alternative funding sources, and piloting new financing approaches.

**Task 4.1.3 - Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL):**

A strong MEL approach is used to monitor the impact of RIS interventions and inform improvements. Engagement metrics are monitored, feedback is collected, and successful models are shared for replication.

### Task 4.2 - RIS Hubs:

**Lead:** EIT CC GmbH & CLCs | **Duration:** M1-M36 | **Budget:** EUR 500 000 | **FSTP:** Yes | **Cascade %:** 60%

6 RIS Hubs will be rolled out in two cohorts – 2 Hubs in 2026 and 4 Hubs in 2028 through open calls, with requirement shaped by ecosystem mapping, CLC focus and thematic priorities, partner capacity, and available funding. Their role is to expand and strengthen EIT Culture & Creativity activities by creating synergies across CLCs, workstreams and geographies. At the same time, they will respond directly to local challenges and stakeholder needs – engaging both EIT Culture & Creativity partners and the wider ecosystem.

Hub locations and services will align with EIT Culture & Creativity core value propositions focused on Education, Innovation, Business Creation, and Transformation, while remaining consistent with strategies developed across other KICs. RIS Hub activities will be fully aligned with the EIT Culture & Creativity portfolio,

connecting flagship initiatives such as the Academy for Creative Entrepreneurship, innovation calls, and startup and scale-up opportunities under the shared framework of NEB principles. Through a learning-by-doing approach – informed by benchmarking and best practices with other KIC RIS Hubs – each Hub will continuously refine its offer based on results and ecosystem feedback.
RIS Hubs are expected to deliver actions including:

- Organise at least 1 multinational event per year, as well as 2 cross-regional events per Hub annually. In 2027 and 2028, this will result in 2 transnational (multinational) events and 4 regional events in total. Additional events, 1 per Hub, will be organised following the selection of four RIS Hubs in 202.
- Support EIT Culture & Creativity in dissemination, communication of their programmes and services through digital channels;
- Organise at least 2 meetings per year by Hub with local representatives, and high-level contact to support EIT Culture & Creativity in connecting with strategic stakeholders in the RIS Regions, the objective being to launch EIT Culture & Creativity programme locally fully supported by the local authorities willing to strengthen their ecosystem;
- By 2028 and beyond, every RIS Hub is expected to engage with its respective CLC into local or regional funding scheme, to contribute to its financial sustainability as well as the EIT Culture & Creativity financial sustainability strategy;
- Assess on-the-ground impact of the actions by identifying tangible signals of change, emerging trends, and structural shifts within regional ecosystems to inform the next strategic agenda and business plan.

The establishment and implementation of the EIT RIS Hubs will full follow and adhere to the provisions and requirements of the EIT RIS Implementation Framework.

### Task 4.3 - RIS & Knowledge Triangle

**Lead:** EIT CC GmbH & CLCs | **Duration:** M1-M36 | **Budget:** EUR 10 000 000 | **FSTP**: Yes | **Cascade%:** 100%
This task integrates the Knowledge Triangle in RIS regions, contributing to Education, Innovation, and Business Creation KPIs. It delivers programmes, expands innovation capacity, and supports venture creation through various initiatives, strengthening local innovation ecosystems.

**Task 4.3.1 - Education:**

EIT Culture & Creativity will implement the Academy of Creative Entrepreneurship across RIS regions to address skills gaps and foster lifelong learning. The initiative will develop degree and non-degree programmes, CPD courses, and youth entrepreneurship pathways, supported by a blended learning infrastructure.

**Task 4.3.2 - Innovation:**

EIT Culture & Creativity will enhance innovation in the RIS ecosystem through improved funding models, targeted innovation calls, and capacity-building activities. These activities aim to foster investment-ready ventures and a thriving innovation ecosystem.

**Task 4.3.3 - Business Creation:**

EIT Culture & Creativity will support venture creation and growth in RIS regions through hackathons, venture builder calls, and a three-stage support model. Selected ventures will receive funding, acceleration, and post-programme support, including investor matchmaking and visibility at industry events.

**Task 4.3.4 - Transformation & NEB:**
Through its activities supporting NEB ecosystems and NEB Innovation pathways, the RIS regions will be actively supported to transform their territories and foster innovation, entrepreneuship and education. Every call will ensure a fair representation of RIS participants across RIS countries, through guidelines and dedicated communication via the future RIS hubs.

### Task 4.5 - Regional Innovation Booster (RIB)

**Lead:** EIT CC GmbH & CLCs | **Duration:** M1-M36 | **Budget:** EUR 5 000 000 | **FSTP:** Yes | **Cascade %:** 100%

EIT Culture and Creativity has ringfenced EUR 5 million to be dedicated to supporting ventures funnelled directly through the EIT RIB mechanism, including undertaking preliminary analyses and due diligence.

In case (despite of all the efforts) not enough quality startups have been funnelled to EIT Culture & Creativity by mid 2027, a review of the allocated budget for the activity will take place and funds might be allocated to other RIS activities.

| Work package number | 5 |
|---|---|
| Work package title | COORDINATION |

**Objectives**
This Work Package ensures robust governance, transparency, and compliance for the KIC. Its aims are to:

- ensure an effective and compliant implementation of the cascade funding;
- comply with the requirements of the Granting Authority regarding grant cycle, monitoring and reporting;
- coordinate the implementation of the Business Plan with the affiliated entities;
- ensure efficient and transparent governance at HQ and CLC level (EITHE18.1);
- monitor FS and KPI performance across all WPs (EITHE11.2);
- achieve 40% gender balance in governance bodies (EITHE18.1).

### DESCRIPTION OF WORK

### Task 5.1 – Coordination of the Grant

Lead: EIT CC GmbH | Duration: M1-M36 | Budget: EUR 1 706 382 | FSTP: No | Cascade %: 0%
Business Planning, participation in working groups, reporting, amendment to grants

### Task 5.2 – Compliance with the Granting Authority requirements

Lead: EIT CC GmbH | Duration: M1-M36 | Budget: EUR 400 000 | FSTP: No | Cascade %: 0% coordination of CFS for the participants, budgeting and cost control of the participants

### Task 5.3 – Cascade Funding implementation

Lead: EIT CC GmbH | Duration: M1-M36 | Budget: EUR 4 000 000 | FSTP: No | Cascade %: 0%
Calls for FSTPs, validation of subgrantees, signature of subgrant and project agreements, coordination of the monitoring of projects for progress and impact, cost checks and compliance of the subgrantees, pre-finance of subgrantees and final settlement for recipients of FSTPs

**Governance model and management structure**

EIT Culture & Creativity comprises the HQ in Cologne (two legal entities, e.V. and GmbH) and six CLCs that are fully owned by the GmbH (further information in WP6 – Ecosystems). Key functions such as Programmes, Finance, HR, Marketing and IT are streamlined through the central HQ. Meanwhile, the CLCs will act as business development units, taking the lead in nurturing and expanding the innovation community in their respective regions, synergising closely with their CLC counterparts and the management team. Additionally, the CLCs' services include providing equal access to information and guidance on EIT Culture & Creativity call processes for all regional stakeholders, organising innovative business events, and fostering regional and interregional connections.

**Improvement of the call selection process and resources**

The KIC has been reinforcing the resources aiming to improve the call selection process since 2025. Developments include:

- team growth;
- standardisation of the call templates and training to the teams in Education, Business Creation and Innovation and RIS for a quality call process implementation;
- the independency of the selection process has been reinforced by increasing the reliability on the external experts and by adjusting the ranking selection.

For the next cycle 2026–2028, the KIC will further ramp up its operational capacity by creating a dedicated "Grants & Funding" unit. This will comprise several team members from finance, legal and other departments, along with the PMO team. Within the Grants & Funding unit, and for the implementation of the cascade funding, there will be dedicated sections to:

- pre-award (calls for Cascade Funding until the subgrant agreements are signed and the pre-finance received);
- post-award (from the kick-off of the project until it´s finalisation, including monitoring and cost check for FSTPs);
- coordinate the grant and the fulfilment of the obligations with the granting authority.

The improvement will rely in simplification of the current processes and automatisation of new processes along with the adoption of NetSuite as the Grant Management tool.

**Budget, costs not covered by indirect costs:**

EUR 5.9 million (2026–2028), internal. Direct costs not covered by the indirect costs include the grants and funding team as well as part of the legal, tech and finance team when they are involved in:

- calls, post award, cost compliance;
- MEL, reporting, business plan and monitoring;
- budgeting and pre-finance definition and execution;
- drafting and signature of cascade funding project and agreements;
- Financial Sustainability agreements, participation in programmes;
- panels for evaluation and redress mechanism assessment;
- data management and compliance with the requirements of the granting authority, cost control for subgrantees;

- validation and due diligence, as well as risk assessment for cascade funding.

Part of the budget is dedicated to the remuneration of the external experts participating in the evaluation of the calls for cascading funds and eventually for the monitoring of the activities.

| Work package number | 6 |
|---|---|
| Work package title | COMMUNICATION, STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT, DISSEMINATION AND EXPLOITATION OF RESULTS |

**Objective**

The objective of **WP6** is to strengthen the visibility and positioning of the EIT and EIT Culture & Creativity (EIT Culture & Creativity) across the EU and associated countries through clear, consistent and strategically targeted communication of activities, opportunities and results.

In close alignment with the **EIT Culture & Creativity partnership strategy**, WP6 will support the expansion of the KIC's ecosystem by engaging **sector platforms, industry associations, regional innovation actors, corporates and strategic partners** across the Cultural and Creative Sectors and Industries (CCSI). Communication and stakeholder engagement activities will therefore not only increase awareness, but also **generate programme pipelines, attract new partners, and facilitate participation in EIT Culture & Creativity calls, innovation programmes and business creation initiatives**.

Through coordinated outreach, dissemination and community-building activities, WP6 will strengthen the credibility and visibility of the KIC, foster collaboration across the knowledge triangle, and maximise the **uptake, scalability and market deployment of KIC-supported innovations** within European and international ecosystems.

**This Work Package aims to:**

- expand ecosystem participation by showcasing funding, collaboration, and engagement opportunities. (EITHE08.1, EITHE09.1);
- reinforce institutional credibility through transparent, evidence-based communication fully aligned with EIT visibility rules. (EITHE08.1, EITHE09.1);
- promote results dissemination and uptake to target audiences, ensuring KIC outputs translate into tangible benefits. (EITHE04.1);
- strengthen stakeholder engagement at EU, national, and regional levels, ensuring balanced representation across geographies and sectors. (EITHE08.1, EITHE09.1);

- Leverage strategic events, media channels, and digital tools to generate measurable reach, engagement, and follow-on activity that supports impact KPIs and contributes to Financial Sustainability. (EITHE04.1, EITHE07.1, EITHE08.1).

**Description**

### Task 6.1 - Coordination and Reporting

**Lead:** EIT CC GmbH & CLCs | **Duration:** M1-M36 | **Budget:** EUR 2 968 966 | **FSTP:** No | **Cascade %:** 0%

WP6 coordinates KIC-wide communication, ensuring coherence and compliance with EIT requirements. It manages brand consistency, maintains platforms, and supports regional contributions to effectively communicate achievements and opportunities.

**Task 6.1.1 - FSM setup & management:**

WP7's core focus is on outreach rather than revenue generation, so its FSM approach is indirect. The communication WP supports Financial Sustainability by leveraging partnerships and cost-effective outreach rather than by generating income directly. It explores co-branding and sponsorship opportunities for key events and media campaigns to offset costs, and makes use of existing European Commission tools/services to extend its reach without additional expenditure. For example, the team taps into free dissemination support such as the Horizon Results Platform and Horizon Booster services, ensuring wide visibility for KIC results at minimal cost. By enhancing the KIC's public profile and credibility, WP6 also indirectly attracts potential new partners and investors, thus contributing to the KIC's Financial Sustainability through increased external engagement.

**Task 6.1.2 - Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL):**

This task uses data-driven analytics and feedback to continually improve communication outcomes. The WP tracks a range of outreach metrics – website traffic, social media followers, newsletter engagement, media mentions, etc. – to gauge the visibility and audience reach of KIC messages. Dissemination activities are closely monitored for effectiveness: the team ensures transparency in reporting results and shares learnings both internally and with stakeholders. Regular analysis of these metrics (with support from external media monitoring services as needed) feeds into strategy adjustments. For instance, content strategies or channels are revised based on what the analytics reveal about audience response, ensuring that communication efforts continually evolve to better support the KIC's goals. This emphasis on MEL in communications also contributes to the broader KIC learning, as success stories and lessons from across WPs are disseminated and inform future activities.

### Task 6.2 - Strategic Communication and EIT/KIC Visibility

**Lead:** EIT CC GmbH & CLCs | **Duration:** M1-M36 | **Budget:** EUR 1 496 000 | **FSTP:** No | **Cascade:** 0%

This task delivers annual communication campaigns and year-round visibility actions across digital platforms, press, social media, and strategic events to build strong brand awareness and drive engagement. Activities are sequenced to maintain a steady visibility rhythm, with high-impact peaks around flagship KIC-owned and co-branded events, including the NEB Festival, Main Event, Regional Open Days, 100-to-Watch Event, Demo Days (Business Creation), and EIT flagship platforms such as EIT Awards and INNOVEIT. Each event is designed as a KPI delivery point, contributing to EITHE08.1 and EITHE09.1 through audience reach and engagement, and to EITHE04.1 by showcasing exploitable results. Subcontracted services cover media partnerships, paid content placement, corporate video production, graphic design (Pouce-Pied), and website/digital hub management (Hive Brite, WM Studio). Digital marketing tools (Mailchimp, Adobe, Canva, Press Database) enable precise targeting, audience segmentation, and campaign analytics, ensuring resource efficiency and

measurable ROI. Communication agencies provide expert campaign execution, ensuring that creative outputs remain consistent with EIT brand guidelines while adapting messaging for diverse CCSI audiences.

### Task 6.3 - Stakeholder Engagement

**Lead:** EIT CC GmbH & CLCs | **Duration:** M1-M36 | **Budget:** EUR 1 160 000| **FSTP:** No | **Cascade:** 0%

This task builds and sustains meaningful connections with EU institutions, national and regional authorities, industry associations, and sectoral networks, directly contributing to ecosystem participation KPIs (EITHE08.1, EITHE09.1) and strengthening the KIC's policy influence. Activities include the Central Partner Meeting, targeted policy roundtables, Industry Vertical Surveys to capture market intelligence, high-level speaker engagements, and public affairs initiatives to position EIT Culture & Creativity as a reference point for CCSI innovation policy. Regional Offices/CLCs lead place-based outreach, ensuring messages resonate locally while aligning with central strategy. Stakeholder mapping and segmentation underpin engagement plans, allowing tailored interventions for underrepresented sectors (audiovisual, gaming, architecture, fashion, cultural heritage) and geographies, particularly RIS regions. Close coordination with WP3 (Business Creation) ensures that venture showcases and Demo Days are leveraged for investor and partner engagement, while WP9 (Transformation & NEB) activities - especially the NEB Festival - are positioned as entry points for new strategic collaborations.

### Task 6.4 - Dissemination and Exploitation of Results

**Lead:** EIT CC GmbH & CLCs | **Duration:** M1-M36 | **Budget:** EUR 480 000 | **FSTP:** No | **Cascade:** 0%

This task ensures that results from all WPs are actively shared, replicated, and exploited, with a target of at least 15 results per year uploaded to the Horizon Results Platform, directly contributing to EITHE04.1. Dissemination is underpinned by structured knowledge-sharing through the EIT Knowledge Centre and complemented by the production of replication guides, policy briefs, and integration recommendations that transform project outcomes into sector-wide resources.

EIT Culture & Creativity leverages European Commission services such as Horizon Booster to extend exploitation potential and support beneficiaries in accessing new markets, funding sources, and policy channels. Content generated from flagship events (100-to-Watch, Demo Days, NEB Festival, Industry Vertical Surveys) feeds into targeted campaigns that inform policymakers, investors, and industry leaders. Emergency communication protocols ensure rapid, coordinated responses to reputational or operational risks, safeguarding public trust and institutional credibility.

| Work package number | 7 |
|---|---|
| Work package title | FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY |

**Objectives**

This Work Package delivers the mechanisms to secure long-term financial independence of EIT Culture & Creativity. It ensures that Innovation, Education, and Business Creation activities generate measurable returns. Its aims are to:

- Diversify revenue sources and achieve ≥30% FS coefficient by 2028. (EITHE11.2);
- Mobilise EUR 42.7 million non-EIT revenues across ROI/equity, membership fees, services, and Alternative sources of funding as NEFAs. (EITHE11.2, EITHE13.1);
- Manage equity, SAFE, and revenue-sharing agreements to create a robust FS portfolio. (EITHE13.1);
- Reinvest returns into the KIC portfolio to ensure sustainability beyond 2028.

**Description of Work**

**a) Revenue Streams and Financial Agents**

EIT Culture & Creativity's financial sustainability model integrates five revenue streams:

1. **ROI and Equity**
    - generated through WP3 and WP4 via equity and SAFE instruments in creative startups;
    - returns reinvested into the Financial Sustainability Fund;
    - co-investment conducted through partner-managed venture funds under compliant governance.
2. **Education**
    - revenues from EIT-labelled Master's and PhD programmes, micro-credentials, executive training, and online modules.
3. **Services**
    - consulting and innovation services for corporates and public institutions, including AI-readiness assessments, foresight analysis, and creative innovation sprints.
4. **Membership Fees**
    - tiered subscriptions on the Digital Hub offering premium access to content, networks, and services.
5. **Alternative Funding**
    - non-grant capital from philanthropic sources, public-private partnerships, CSR co-funding, and family office missions.

**b) Alternative Funding Activities**

Alternative funding will be mobilised through three mechanisms:

1. **Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)**
   Structured collaborations with regional governments and industry to co-fund innovation in areas such as sustainable design, digital heritage, and creative infrastructure. These partnerships typically leverage 1:1 or higher matching ratios.

2. **Philanthropy and Impact Capital**
   Launch of the Creative Futures Fund, pooling contributions from foundations, family offices, and impact investors to support inclusion, sustainability, art-tech entrepreneurship, and cultural innovation.
3. **CSR Co-Financing**
   Partnerships with companies investing in cultural and creative innovation as part of their ESG strategies, supported by a "Creative Partner" recognition framework.

These mechanisms account for approximately 55–58% of total leveraged revenue, reflecting external co-investment rather than direct KIC income.

**c) Use of Existing Venture Funds**

EIT Culture & Creativity will leverage existing venture funds to diversify risk, strengthen deal flow, and accelerate investment readiness. This includes:

- co-investing alongside partner-managed funds active in creative tech, media, sustainability, and design;
- using these funds as anchor co-investors for the future Creative Sovereignty Fund (from 2027);
- engaging public and hybrid regional funds in RIS countries to support local venture pipelines;
- ensuring complementarity between SAFE instruments and structured VC pathways, enabling follow-on investment from seed to Series A;
- maintaining compliance through transparent governance and non-duplicative financial structures.

In **WP1 Innovation**, Task 1.1.1 (FSM Setup & Management) introduces binding financial return mechanisms for all Stage 2 projects, including SAFE agreements, royalties, equity and revenue-sharing. Task 1.2 (Innovation Calls) ensures these mechanisms are applied systematically in the two-stage funding process, while Task 1.4 (Scale+ Venture Growth & Scaling) extends the same principle to mature start-ups and scale-ups, with milestone-based funding conditional on FSM agreements. These activities will create a portfolio of equity, royalty and revenue-sharing commitments.
In **WP2 Education**, Task 2.1.1 (FSM Setup & Management) embeds tuition fees and licensing as the default model for all education activities. Task 2.3 (Degree Education Portfolio) and Task 2.4 (Non-degree Education Portfolio) generate revenues through EIT-labelled master programmes, seasonal schools, CPD and NEB Crafts courses, delivered primarily through the ACE platform. As well as the NEB academy. By 2028, these activities are expected to generate EUR 7.8 million in regional and local funding, sponsorship, tuition and licensing revenues, with income reinvested into new courses and platform development.

Revenues are expected to the Transformation and NEB WP Education Activities as Regional and Local funding. Corporate sponsorship of the NEB Academy is as well contemplated as a relevant source of revenue:

| **Education FS breakdown (EUR):** | **2026** | **2027** | **2028** | **TOTAL** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Tuition fees and sales of professional courses | 64 000 | 236 000 | 300 000 | 600 000 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Regional and local funding | 500 000 | 1 500 000 | 1 9 000 000 | 3 900 000 |
| NEB Academy Tuition Fees | 100.00 0 | 300 000 | 550.000 | 950 000 |
| NEB Academy Corporate sponsorsip | | 650 000 | 1 100 000 | 1 750 000 |
| Other courses (T&NEB) Revenue | | | 600 000 | 600 000 |
| | | | | **EUR 7 800 000** |

In **WP3 Business Creation**, Task 3.1 (Coordination, FSM & MEL) manages the application of FSMs across the venture portfolio. Task 3.2 (Venture Building, Growth & Scaling) requires ventures to sign return agreements, embedding equity-for-service or quasi-equity arrangements. Task 3.4 (Follow-on Services - 100-To-Watch) generates sponsorship and ticket revenues from corporate and investor matchmaking events, while Task 3.5 (Access to Finance) develops alternative funding instruments with potential to return value to the KIC. Across the BP period, WP3 is expected to leverage at least EUR 10 million in private investment for ventures, in addition to generating direct returns from equity and service models.

Through **WP4 RIS**, Task 4.2 (RIS Hubs) produces direct revenues through training, pilots and start-up services, often co-financed with national or regional authorities. Task 4.4 (RIS & KTI incl. FSM) pilots FSMs adapted to regional contexts, including tuition, licensing and equity-for-service arrangements.

In **WP9 Transformation & NEB**, Task 9.2 (Design Systemic Transformation) supports demonstrators with outputs that can be monetised through licensing and services. Task 9.3.3 (NEB Academy capacity building) establishes a fee-based educational programme under the EIT Campus label, while Task 9.3.4 (Resilience Roadmaps) pilots consultancy-style services for municipalities and regions. The Transformation Agents model adds a margin to expert services, creating a pathway for knowledge monetisation. These activities are expected to contribute service-based and fee-based revenues to the KIC, though no quantified targets are included at this stage.

WP7 itself is responsible for consolidating these contributions and implementing a robust monitoring and reporting system. A central FS dashboard will be launched in 2026, followed by annual FS reports and lessons-learned reviews from 2027 onwards. Each year, portfolio performance will be analysed to identify the most profitable revenue streams, with adjustments to call design and resource allocation accordingly. Cost control is ensured through milestone-based FSTP payments, mid-term reviews of large projects, and harmonised procurement procedures, with clear targets of reducing procurement and subcontracting error rates by 15% annually and capping consultancy, legal and infrastructure costs at 10% of internal expenditure.

EIT Culture & Creativity will reach sustainability through a **diversified revenue model**:

- **ROI & equity (EUR 2.5 million)**: portfolio of 100+ ventures with exit opportunities;
- **Education (EUR 7.8 million)**: EIT-labelled degrees, professional learning, modular training, including the NEB Academy;
- **Services & consulting (EUR 1 million)**: advisory for regions, EU institutions, corporates;

- **Membership fees (EUR 7.2 million)**: tiered packages for universities, companies, institutions;
- **Alternative funding (EUR 24.2 million)**: philanthropy, PPPs, and family offices (avoiding private equity in order to preserve mission alignment).

All the teams in EIT Culture & Creativity work jointly to achieve the Financial Sustainability goals. The teams in the areas of Education, Business Creation, Innovation, RIS and Transformation & NEB ensure that the activities implemented through cascade funding are contributing through ROI & Equity, Education revenues, services and consulting. Besides, a dedicated team for Business Development will be reinforced from 2026 onwards, including CLC team members as well as experts at the KIC LE to coordinate and guide the efforts in obtaining alternative sources of funding that can be significant enough as to enable the phasing out of the EIT Funding. That is foreseen as the most important revenue stream for EIT Culture & Creativity. Membership fees are expected to grow in this period and will be another important source of financial sustainability for the KIC.

By 2028, EIT Culture & Creativity will exceed **EUR 42.7M accumulated revenues**, ensuring a steady path towards independence from EIT funding and resilience through diversified income streams.

**Task 7.1 – Financial Sustainability Mechanism (FSM) Development**

Lead: EIT CC GmbH | Duration: M1-M36 | Budget: EUR 1 261 138 | FSTP: No | Cascade %: 0%

Design and implement diverse FS instruments including SAFEs, equity, and royalties.

**Task 7.2 – Equity Portfolio Management**

Lead: EIT CC GmbH | Duration: M6-M36 | Budget: EUR 1 200 000 | FSTP: No | Cascade %: 0%

Manage portfolio of equity holdings and track ROI.

**Task 7.3 – Alternative sources of funding and NEFA Mobilisation**

Lead: CLCs & partners | Duration: M1-M36 | Budget: EUR 1 300 000 | FSTP: Yes | Cascade %: 60%

Secure Horizon Europe, Creative Europe, Erasmus+, Interreg, and philanthropic funding.

| Work package number | 8 |
|---|---|
| Work package title | ECOSYSTEM |

**This Work Package aims to:**

- Strengthen and expand the KIC ecosystem by growing and diversifying the partner base, with a strong focus on underrepresented geographies, industries, and RIS regions, (EITHE08.1, EITHE09.1);
- Achieve partner retention of at least 80% and significantly increase engagement across all sectors, contributing to EIT KPIs on ecosystem participation and partner diversity. (EITHE08.1, EITHE09.1);
- Generate over EUR 5 545 000 in service-related income by 2028 through memberships, tailored services, and sponsorships, contributing to Financial Sustainability. (EITHE07.1);
- Diversify the portfolio to ensure stronger representation from industries such as audiovisual, gaming, architecture, fashion, and the cultural heritage sector. (EITHE08.1, EITHE09.1);

- Build long-term, value-driven relationships through tailored service offerings, enhanced onboarding, and data-driven account management. (EITHE08.1);
- Leverage digital tools and CRM systems to enable scalable, professional, and performance-oriented ecosystem management. (EITHE07.1, EITHE08.1).

Through the Business Plan 2026–2028, WP8 activities aim to strengthen the resilience, diversity, and Financial Sustainability of the EIT Culture & Creativity ecosystem, ensuring that partner engagement drives measurable impact in line with EIT KPIs. While most activities are delivered directly by the KIC Legal Entity (LE) and Co-Location Centres (CLCs), cascade funding is foreseen for Strategic Topic Groups (STGs), enabling Core and Cooperation partners to lead thematic collaborations that enhance market opportunities, innovation uptake, and access to alternative funding.

**DESCRIPTION OF WORK**

**Task 8.1 - Coordination and Reporting**

**Lead:** EIT CC GmbH | **Duration:** M1-M36 | **Budget:** EUR 3 357 656 | **FSTP:** No | **Cascade %:** 0%

This task manages KIC-wide ecosystem development and partner engagement, ensuring coherence across regions and alignment with EIT Culture & Creativity's strategic objectives.

**Task 8.1.2 - FSM Setup & Management**

WP6 focuses on ecosystem value creation rather than solely on service delivery, with a Financial Sustainability (FS) approach that is both direct and indirect. Directly, the WP contributes to FS through paid memberships, tailored services, and sponsorships, coordinated with CLCs.

**Task 8.1.3 - Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL)**

This task uses data-driven metrics and feedback to improve ecosystem strategies, tracking KPIs like partner retention and revenue to assess network health. Analysis of CRM data, surveys, and gap mapping informs strategy adjustments, strengthening the KIC learning cycle.

**Task 8.2 - Development and Optimisation of Targeted Partnership Service Offerings**

**Lead:** EIT CC GmbH & CLCs | **Duration:** M1-M36 | **Budget:** EUR 360 000 | **FSTP:** No | **Cascade %:** 0%

Partnership services will be enhanced to boost engagement, retention, and revenue. This includes gap analysis, targeted marketing, and refining the partner onboarding journey.

**Task 8.3 - Digital Tools and CRM Development**

**Lead:** EIT CC GmbH | **Duration:** M1-M36 | **Budget:** EUR 315 000 | **FSTP:** No | **Cascade %:** 0%

The digital infrastructure for partner management will be strengthened from 2025 to 2028, including an expanded lead database, a unified engagement platform, and an upgraded CRM with advanced analytics and integration capabilities. This will support sponsorships, service subscriptions, and cross-WP collaboration.

**Task 8.4 - Governance and Partner Account Management**

**Lead:** EIT CC GmbH & CLCs | **Duration:** M1-M36 | **Budget:** EUR 150 000 | **FSTP:** No | **Cascade %:** 0%

Governance and account management structures are implemented to ensure a consistent partner experience. Key Account Managers will maintain engagement and act as the main contact for strategic accounts, with a focus on RIS partners.

**Task 8.5 - Strategic Topic Groups (STGs)**

**Lead:** EIT CC GmbH & Partners | **Duration:** M1-M36 | **Budget:** EUR 2 500 000 | **FSTP:** Yes | **Cascade** 90%:

STGs are partner-driven initiatives led by Core and Cooperation partners with active membership, aimed at enhancing knowledge transfer within the KIC Partnership and securing long-term Financial Sustainability. They enable excellence in research and innovation by creating methodologies and frameworks for identifying, designing, and delivering high-potential projects, while reducing the financial risks associated with early-stage development. In close collaboration with WP9 Transformation & NEB, STGs embed sustainability, inclusivity, and aesthetics into project design from the outset, ensuring alignment with NEB values.

**Key activities include:**

- co-creation workshops to shape and validate project concepts with market, policy, and societal relevance;
- collaborative market and policy analyses to prepare targeted recommendations for CCSI sectors;
- scouting and alignment with alternative funding sources, including EU programmes and national promotional banks;
- identifying market opportunities emerging from past and ongoing KIC projects, translating them into investment-ready propositions;
- public consultations and foresight exercises to generate strategic insights for the next Strategic Agenda and EU-level partnerships.

To deliver these outcomes, STGs will be supported with small grants of up to EUR 185 000 to accelerate market entry. EUR 400 000 earmarked in 2025 will fund eight projects into 2026 (EUR 50 000 per project), producing actionable insights, market intelligence, and content that strengthen both the KIC's innovation portfolio and its influence within the European innovation ecosystem.

**Industry partner participation plan:**

To increase private-sector involvement, EIT Culture & Creativity will implement a three-pronged strategy:

1. **Co-Investment Partnerships**
    - introduce "Innovation Partner" status for companies contributing financially or in-kind to FSTP projects;
    - launch thematic co-investment calls inviting industry to act as challenge owners;
    - provide visibility and co-branding opportunities to industrial co-funders.
2. **Corporate Innovation Services**
    - offer tailored innovation sprints, creative labs, and proof-of-concept programmes;
    - provide fee-based advisory services in creative innovation, AI adoption, and ESG integration;
    - engage corporates seeking to embed creativity into sustainability and digital transformation strategies.
3. **AI Flagship Industry Network**
    - build an industry-driven consortium to co-develop and validate AI tools for creative workflows;
    - facilitate collaboration on data governance, ethical AI, and generative content;

- align with European AI policy frameworks to position EIT Culture & Creativity as a trusted intermediary between CCSI and tech industries.

Target Number of Industry Participants

At least 60 industry participants in 2026, scaling to over 100 by 2028, ensuring sectoral and geographic balance across CCSI domains.

Outreach Plan

- **Regional Hubs and RIS Networks:** local engagement, matchmaking events, and Creative Innovation Days.
- **European-Level Collaboration:** partnerships with trade and industry associations, European clusters, and major EU initiatives.

**Digital Communication:** targeted campaigns via the Digital Hub, LinkedIn, and CCSI media networks

IBC (International Broadcasting Convention) collaboration:

IBC has become more than an annual trade fair. Its year-round Innovation Programme, the Accelerator model, and the rapidly growing IBC365 editorial platform have positioned it as a global convenor of industry thinking. Its community includes 60 000 participants from broadcasters, content developers, platform operators, major technology vendors, startups, research groups, and standard-setting bodies. Several of their priority themes – trusted media, Provenance, AI in production, sustainable workflows (and its impact), cloud-native infrastructure, new audience frameworks, industry training schemes (where it requires help to grow) – map directly onto our own focus areas in the audiovisual sector. Collaboration can include a:

- sustained cycle of joint events
- shared innovation pipeline
- combined expert network
- joint accelerator programme
- long-term editorial presence on IBC365, marketing visibility, brand visibility and access to a network of private sector and industry that is a potential pipeline for enhanced CRM and memberships.

| **Work package number** | **9** |
|---|---|
| **Work package title** | **TRANSFORMATION & NEB** |

**Objectives**

Through the Business Plan 2026–2028, WP9 will mainstream **New European Bauhaus (NEB)** principles and societal transformation into the EIT Culture & Creativity portfolio. Building on the design work carried out in 2025 and **within the overall scope of the NEB Academy, as per COM(2025)1026, WP9 delivers NEB demonstrators** to develop skills, disseminate methods and upscale systemic solutions through the NEB Innovation Pathways.

At the EIT Culture & Creativity we are activating our knowledge and innovation community, which is already operating in the NEB initiative. **26 of our Partners** are currently involved in NEB activities and further expected with the new NEB calls, the establishment of NEB Labs and NEB Local Chapters.

Furthermore, we have activated **3 NEB-focused, partner-driven Strategic Topic Groups**, with the goal of **advancing design-led and resilience-focused innovation**, strengthening CCSIs, building partnerships and translating NEB values into **pathways for scalable, inclusive, sustainable place-based transformation across Europe**.

The level of expertise and engagement within our community is high, creating the perfect preconditions for excellence in carrying out these activities and further extending the regional reach.

The activities of WP 9 are aligned with the following Strategic Objectives of the Strategic Agenda:

**SO1 :** Future-proofing CCSI students and professionals with entrepreneurial and cross-disciplinary skills for the green and digital transition;

**SO2:** Deploying and scaling CCSI innovations on green and digital technologies and new business models unlocking positive societal and economic impact;

**SO3:** Accelerating and scaling CCSI market opportunities to compete globally.

WP9 pursues the following objectives:

- launches societal transformation NEB demonstrators for innovative solutions, in regional ecosystems, in coordination with the CLCs, through the NEB Systemic Narratives. (SO2, SO3);
- supports the transition towards circular and regenerative practices of SMEs and public actors through programmes such as Fashion Shift. (SO2, SO3);
- develops and disseminates NEB toolkits, methodologies and curricula across CCSI subsectors, supporting uptake in policy, business, and education, through the capacity building component of the NEB Academy, the Resilience Roadmaps and the Cities & Regions Network. (SO1);
- informs and aligns with EU policies on sustainability, inclusion, resilience and cultural innovation, ensuring measurable contributions to the European Green Deal, EU Culture Compass and the NEB initiative. (SO1);
- supports the KIC's Financial Sustainability through co-investment in Fashion Shift, NEB Academy (capacity building) tuition/fees, NEB Systemic Narratives with long-term partnerships with regions and industries.

Quantified WP9 impacts by 2028 include:

- **NEB Systemic Narratives**: establishing at least 5 ecosystem demonstrators to operationalise the NEB Innovation pathway and accelerate regional innovation, supporting 25 startups, launching 5 innovations on the market and attracting EUR 250 000 investment;
- **NEB Academy (capacity building component,** vocational training**)**: 6 200 learners trained, 7 000 students engaged in EIT-labelled programmes, 11 000 participants in trainings and EUR 3.5 million funding mobilised with the support of the CLCs;
- **Fashion Shift**: at least 5 SMEs/consortia supported (2026 call) and at least 30 supported SMEs by 2028, attracting at least EUR 1 million in investment;
- **Resilience roadmaps**: 500 employees upskilled across organisations;
- **Cities & Regions Network**: 15–20 local/regional authorities engaged, with ≥30% from RIS, re-skilling and upskilling up to 160 people.

**Description of work**

**Task 9.1 – Leadership and Coordination of Programmes**

**Lead**: EIT CC GmbH & Partners | **Duration**: M1–M36 | **Budget**: EUR 4 791 265 | **FSTP**: No | **Cascade %**: 0%

This task ensures coherent management of WP9, including alignment with EU NEB priorities, stakeholder engagement, integration across the KIC and coordination with the EIT Community NEB.

**Task 9.1.1 – FSM setup & management**:

WP9 will test **new FS models** specific to NEB programmes, such as co-funding with cities/regions, academy fees, and private sponsorship for demonstrators. Commitments will be tracked in the FS portfolio.

**Task 9.1.2 – Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL)**:

WP9 establishes a MEL framework focused on **societal and cultural impact**. All NEB pilots and demonstrators will undergo milestone-based monitoring, generating evidence and lessons for scaling. In addition, the EIT Culture & Creativity is part of the NEB working group on NEB indicators and it will implement them in the monitoring our funded projects.

**Cost Breakdown for Task9.1 : (Total EUR 4.8 million)**

The main cost driver is the staff who will be implementing and monitoring the WP. It includes a Director of Transition & New European Bauhaus (T&NEB), a Head of T&NEB and a number of programme managers (6) who will be ensuring the optimal implementation of all the activities planned in this Work Package

- Staff costs: EUR 3.6 million (8 FTEs average for 3 years)
- Travel costs: EUR 0.12 million (for the 8 employees during the 3 years of implementation)
- Cost of other goods and services: EUR 0.12 million
- Indirect costs EUR 0.96 million

**Task 9.2 – Design Systemic Transformation within the NEB Academy**

**Lead**: EIT CC GmbH & Partners | **Duration**: M1–M36 | **Budget**: EUR 23 375, 000 | **FSTP**: Yes | **Cascade %**: 100%

This task delivers systemic change through demonstrators, training programmes and policy innovation, implemented mainly via cascade funding, grounded in practices of gender equality and inclusion. The task is achieved in collaboration with the NEB at the Joint Research Centre (JRC), with the support of the EIT, as per COM(2025)/1027. The NEB Systemic Narratives supports innovation pathways in regional ecosystem transformation; the NEB Fashion shift supports entrepreneurs in collaborative practices; the NEB Academy (capacity building) supports life-long learning with innovative and collaborative educational formats.

**Task 9.2.1 – NEB Systemic Narratives**

- implement NEB **innovation pathways** to fund a portfolio (at least 5 projects selected through 2 calls) of regional ecosystems, supporting **local and regional transformation of the lived environment** through design approaches and cultural practices, promoting new forms of innovation (innovative services, business models, governance models and learning formats) and supporting at least 25 startups;
- organise **12 thematic exchanges** with policymakers, coordinators and practitioners to facilitate the uptake of NEB practices in synergy with the EIT Impact Framework;
- create knowledge-sharing mechanisms with NEB beneficiaries.

**Task 9.2.2 – NEB Fashion Shift**

- support at least 30 SMEs and 5 consortia in the uptake of circular practices and with sustainability training and create regional and trans-regional platforms of collaboration;
- launch **first call in 2026**: fund up to 5 SMEs/consortia (EUR up to 500 000 each), aiming to attract **≥EUR 1 million investment** by 2028;
- exploring the provision of investor matchmaking via Business Creation Investment Network;
- promote the regional anchoring of the selected companies through the Cities and Regions Network and other EIT Culture & Creativity tools.

**Task 9.2.3 – Development of the NEB Academy (**capacity building component**)**

- completion of the ongoing feasibility plan, in collaboration with the EIT and the NEB at the JRC around governance, legal frameworks and pedagogy;
- implementation of the feasibility plan, by launching calls for upskilling and reskilling; operationalising the governance model and further develop the regional reach and activation, in collaboration with the CLCs;
- cascade funding to design curricula, quality frameworks and certification standards;
- focus on enhancing the contribution of the CCSIs in the transformation of the lived environment;
- by 2028: 6 200 learners trained, 7 000 learners engaged in EIT-labelled programme. Funding mobilised EUR 3.5 million. 11 600 trainings under CCSI02.

| **Target Group** | **2026 (Launch)** | **2027 (Scaling)** | **2028 (Maturity)** | **Total** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| TG1 – Academia & VET (Education & Training) – lifelong learning (LLL) #Learners | 700 | 1 200 | 1 500 | 3 400 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| TG2 – Construction Ecosystem (Industry & Practice) – LLL #Learners | 800 | 2 000 | 2 500 | 5 300 |
| TG3 – Public Bodies & Decision-Makers (Governance & Finance) – LLL, #Learners | 800 | 1 200 | 2 500 | 4 500 |
| TG4 – Civil Society & Media (Engagement & Communication) – Training & Awareness, #Participants | 1 600 | 3 000 | 7 000 | 11 600 |
| **TOTAL** | 3 900 | 7 400 | 13 500 | 24 800 |

The number of learners will be re-evaluated and possibly increased through a status reassessment planned in Q3 2027.

**Background information of the NEB Academy (capacity building component)**
Currently financed by the European Commission, it has, so far, been implemented through the NEBA Alliance, a consortium whose project runs until Q1 2026. EIT Culture & Creativity has been actively involved in a co-creation process with the NEBA Alliance partners and the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) to define the future governance model, roles and responsibilities, including the specific contribution of EIT Culture & Creativity.
A feasibility plan is being finalised. At the time of delivering this BP, the document is still alive and will be uploaded to the portal once finalised as per the deliverable defined.

The Governance and Future Integration of NEB Academy will clarify how EIT Culture & Creativity contributes to the operational roll-out of the NEB Academy, the long-term business and sustainability model, the regional activation through the CLC network, integrated the EIT label in the NEB learning pathway and the integration with EIT Campus.

This coordinated approach ensures a coherent NEB Academy (capacity building), with EIT Culture & Creativity serving as one of the essential implementing partners.

**Task 9.2.4 – The Resilience Roadmaps**

- open a call in 2026 to support cultural organisations in developing and implementing resilience strategies within their local communities and ecosystems;
- train and upskill **500 employees** across cultural, creative and related industries.

**Task 9.2.5 – The Cities & Regions Network (C&RN)**

- select **10 consortia of cities/regions** (≥30% RIS) to co-develop transformative cultural policies;
- activities: peer learning workshops, local events, toolkits for transversal policies, policy briefs;
- strengthen cross-sector collaboration between public authorities, civil society, and investors;
- produce innovative policy making tools and practices for the CCSI.

**Alignment with EU priorities.** WP9 is fully aligned with:

- **New European Bauhaus**: delivering the NEB Academy and demonstrators announced by the Commission;

- **EU Competitiveness Compass**: building resilient creative ecosystems that boost competitiveness.
- **European Green Deal**: supporting circular transitions in fashion, sustainable built environments, and resilience planning;
- **EU Gender Equality Strategy**: integrating gender into SME selection, Academy curricula, and resilience pilots.

**Financial Sustainability**

- Fashion Shift: co-investment from investors and business networks;
- NEB Academy: tuition fees, accreditation revenues, corporate sponsorship, and public-private partnerships;
- Cities & Regions Network: co-funding from participating regions/cities.

**Financial sustainability of the NEB Academy** – capacity building initiative – is built on a phased model that progressively shifts from EU seed funding to revenue generation and national co-funding. The roadmap ensures an appropriate balance between the budget invested, the number of beneficiaries reached, and the expected impact on skills development for the built and lived environment.

**Dissemination & Exploitation**

- **NEB Innovation Pathways** disseminated across CCSI;
- **Innovative policy-making practices** from C&RN shared with EU/local stakeholders;
- **NEB Academy** (capacity building) **outputs** mainstreamed into higher education and professional training;
- Results showcased at the **Innovation Forum** and in RIS regions;
- Active in relevant fora, such as NEB Festival, Ars Electronica, Dutch Design Week, etc.

**Deliverables and Milestones (examples)**

- **D9.1** – NEB Academy (capacity building) updated feasibility study and governance model (M4, 12)
- **D9.2** – NEB Academy curricula published (M30)
- **D9.3** – Updated Interactive Report of the NEB Systemic Narratives (M36)

**Milestones:**

- **MS9.1** – First NEB Systemic Narratives thematic exchanges (M9).
- **MS9.2** – Launch of Fashion Shift (M10).
- **MS9.3** – NEB Academy (capacity building) governance established with EIT Culture & Creativity in the advisory board (M24).
- **MS9**.4 - Identified relevant content for the final update of the NEB Systemic Narratives Report (M30)

**Contribution to EIT Core and KIC KPIs**

| Task | Strand | KPI | Target Full BP | 2026 | 2027 | 2028 | FSTP |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9.2.1 | NEB Systemic Narratives | EITHE02 | **6** | 0 | 0 | 6 | |
| 9.2.1 | NEB Systemic Narratives | EITHE03 | **25** | 0 | 10 | 15 | **7.65M€** |
| 9.2.1 | NEB Systemic Narratives | EITHE06 | **250K** | | | 250k | |
| 9.2.2 | NEB Fashion Shift | EITHE03 | **30** | 10 | 10 | 10 | **4.25M€** |
| 9.2.2 | NEB Fashion Shift | EITHE06 | **1M€** | 0 | 0 | 1M€ | |
| 9.2.3 | NEB Academy capacity building | CCSI02 | **11600** | 1600 | 3000 | 7000 | |
| 9.2.3 | NEB Academy capacity building | EITHE08 | **6,200** | 2,300 | 3,200 | 700 | **8,5M€** |
| 9.2.3 | NEB Academy capacity building | EITHE07 | **7,000** | 0 | 1,200 | 5,800 | |
| 9.2.3 | NEB Academy capacity building | EITHE11 | **3.5M€** | 0.5M€ | 1.2M€ | 1.8M€ | |
| 9.2.4 | Resilience Roadmap | EITHE08 | **500** | 200 | 300 | 0 | **1.275M€** |
| 9.2.4 | Resilience Roadmap | CCSI05 | **10** | 0 | 10 | 0 | |
| 9.2.5 | Cities & Regions Network | EITHE08 | **160** | 80 | 80 | 0 | **1.7M€** |

**Coordination mechanisms with Cross-KIC INNOBC WP2 NEB**

EIT Culture & Creativity will establish formal coordination mechanisms with the Cross-KIC INNOBC WP2 NEB to ensure alignment, avoid duplication, and jointly maximise impact. The coordination framework includes four complementary layers:

- **Structured Governance & Regular Alignment**
- **Joint Portfolio Coordination**
- **Shared Applicant Funnel & Call Synchronisation**
- **KPI Mapping & Reporting Consistency**

This coordinated approach strengthens the collective impact of NEB-related activities across the entire EIT Community.

**Usage of EIT Community NEB brand**

EIT Culture & Creativity fully commits to using the EIT Community NEB brand for all external communications related to NEB activities, when relevant. This includes calls, events, publications, online presence, stakeholder engagement, and all visual and narrative communication materials.

To ensure consistent and compliant implementation, we will:

- **Integrate NEB Branding into Communication Workflows** when applicable**;**
- **Coordinate monthly with Cross-KIC WP2 NEB** including a dedicated communications check, ensuring that messaging, visual identity and positioning remain consistent with the EIT Community NEB identity;
- **Establish clear positioning of EIT Culture & Creativity** in all NEB-related communication, EIT Culture & Creativity will be explicitly positioned as the sectoral and thematic delivery arm for the cultural and creative sectors within the wider EIT Community NEB framework;
- **Exploit joint communication opportunities** where we will coordinate announcements, key milestones and success stories with Cross-KIC WP2 NEB to ensure unified outreach and maximise European visibility.

Summary

Through systematic branding integration, monthly coordination and clear role definition, EIT Culture & Creativity guarantees consistent use of the EIT Community NEB brand while reinforcing its role as the cultural and creative sector leader within the NEB ecosystem.

**Coordination of NEB Academy (capacity building) in WP9 with Education activities (WP2)**

EIT Culture & Creativity commits to integrating all education activities – including the NEB Crafts Academy, the NEB Academy and future learning initiatives – under the EIT Campus framework, in alignment with EIT guidelines and the KIC Education Strategy.

WP2 will share practices and knowledge regarding the EIT label, to avoid cost duplication. The digital learning platform developed through WP2 will be used by the NEB Academy (capacity building).

**Contribution to job creation**

WP9 contributes to job creation by equipping Europe's workforce – both current and future – with the skills, capacities and professional pathways required in tackling complex societal challenges, maintain or boost innovation capacity, in line with the New European Bauhaus values and to fulfil the green and digital transitions.

- **Creating New Professional Profiles and Roles**

  Through NEB Academy programmes, transformation training and resilience upskilling, WP9 supports the emergence of new job categories such as:

  ▪Transformation Agents, applying CCSI methods and skills, supporting private and public sector in sustainable systemic transformation processes;

  ▪ Circularity specialists in fashion and creative industries;

  ▪ Resilience stewards within cultural organisations;

  ▪ Design-led innovation facilitators for cities and regions.

These roles respond directly to labour market gaps identified in the built environment, cultural heritage and creative sectors.

- **Reskilling and Employability for Fast-Evolving Sectors**

WP9 strengthens employability by preparing professionals to adapt to societal, environmental and technological changes, by training professionals and public officials in NEB-relevant skills, upskilling cultural organisations to operate more sustainably and resiliently, supporting creative SMEs to adopt new business and production models

- **Strengthening Local Ecosystems to Generate Employment**

Large-scale transformation projects (Systemic Narratives, Cities & Regions) stimulate local job creation by enabling new cultural and creative services, supporting local production chains (e.g. regenerative fashion), contributing to sustainable renovation and circular economy activities, fostering entrepreneurship and micro-enterprise formation. These ecosystemic interventions create multiplier effects that benefit entire local labour markets.

- **Supporting SME Growth and Venture Creation**

  Programmes targeting SMEs and startups (e.g. NEB Fashion Shift) help companies innovate, diversify revenue streams and scale – directly contributing to job creation within CCSI value chains.

### 3.1c - List of Deliverables

The following deliverables have been selected to ensure traceability and accountability of outputs aligned with EIT Culture & Creativity's mission and Strategic Agenda. Deliverables have been defined to correspond with key outputs across all Work Packages. Each represents a tangible and verifiable result of planned activities, supporting monitoring and reporting processes through the Funding and Tenders Portal. In line with the EIT BP Guidelines, all mandatory deliverables are included. Additional deliverables per WP will serve to showcase innovation outputs, capacity-building materials, and communications artefacts, among others.

***Table 3.1c - List of Deliverables***

| Number | Deliverable name | Short description | Work package number | Short name of lead participant | Type | Dissemination level | Delivery date (in months) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| D01-WP2 | KIC Label Programme Implementation | Report that describes the implementation of the WP Education to particular EIT Label elements (at Masters, Doctoral level, Fellowship, professional education) | WP2 | EITCC GmbH | R | SEN | 15, 27, 36 |
| D01-WP4 | EIT RIS Activity Update | Information on the main activities implemented under the EIT RIS Work Package, with a focus on data and information to be used in external communication purposes. | WP4 | EITCC GmbH | R | SEN | 6, 12, 18, 24, 30, 36 |
| D02-WP4 | EIT RIS Hubs Activity Update | Information on the work of the individual RIS Hubs, including performance against their targets. Those EIT KICs that have fully integrated their EIT RIS Hubs – in line with Chapter 9.6 of the EIT RIS Implementation Framework – do not need to submit an EIT RIS Hubs Activity Update. | WP4 | EITCC GmbH | R | SEN | 3, 15, 27, 36 |
| D01-WP5 | Data Management Plan | Short description of FAIR data, security, ethics, etc. | WP5 | EITCC GmbH | DMP | PU | 6 |
| D02-WP5 | Anti-Fraud Strategy Implementation | Report on the annual implementation of the KIC anti-fraud strategy | WP5 | EITCC GmbH | R | SEN | 3, 13, 25 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| D03-WP5 | Annual Gender Mainstreaming Report | Annual report on gender mainstreaming – following the EIT template with instructions provided – including an overview of the KIC strategies, initiatives and results on gender equality. Including a special focus on: increasing participation of women in innovation, business creation & acceleration, and male-dominated education sectors, STEM; inclusive programme design; integration of gender dimension into innovation and education content; gender equality capacity building, and gender balance within the KIC and in all sub-granted activities, including at supervisory and managerial level. | WP5 | EITCC GmbH | R | SEN | 3, 15, 27 |
| D01-WP6 | Annual Communication Action Plan and Calendar | Annual Action Plan that covers the planned and foreseen tasks related to external communications and branding, stakeholders' engagement, dissemination and exploitation activities as well as the channels and tools to be mobilised, including expected results and KPIs of the EIT Impact Framework for the given year.<br>A calendar containing the key events and announcements (press releases, key Call openings etc.) planned by the KIC, as well as key events, meetings with institutional stakeholders at EU and Member State level and announcements planned by the KIC. The overview should present clear links to the KIC Strategic Agenda and the KPIs and targets as presented in Table 2.1. The calendar foresees regular updates throughout the year. | WP6 | EITCC GmbH | R | PU | 3, 13, 25 |
| D02-WP6 | Impact stories | Impact stories from each Member State/HE Assoc. Country where KIC is active, covering business creation & acceleration, innovation-driven research and entrepreneurial education according to given template. | WP6 | EITCC GmbH | DEC | PU | 3, 15, 27 |
| D03-WP6 | Factsheet data | EIT Factsheet template completed with communication assets for the annual update of the EIT KIC Factsheets | WP6 | EITCC GmbH | DEC | PU | 3, 7, 19, 26 |
| D01-WP7 | FS yearly report (N-1) | Yearly report based on the provided EIT template and in line with included instructions. | WP7 | EITCC GmbH | R | SEN | 7, 19, 31 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| D01-WP1 | Innovation yearly report | Yearly report on the activities and outputs of the WP1 | WP1 | EITCC GmbH | R | SEN | 13,25,36 |
| D01-WP3 | Business Creation yearly report | Yearly report on the activities and outputs of the WP3 | WP3 | EITCC GmbH | R | SEN | 13,25,36 |
| D01-WP8 | Ecosystem yearly report | Yearly report on the activities and outputs of the WP8 | WP8 | EITCC GmbH | R | SEN | 13,25,36 |
| D01-WP9 | NEB Academy (capacity building) updated feasibility study and governance model | Report on NEB Academy (capacity building) feasibility, status and achievements) | WP9 | ECC GmbH | R | SEN | 5,12 |
| D02-WP9 | Curricula NEB Academy | NEB Academy curricula published through EIT channels | WP9 | EIT Culture & Creativity GmbH | R | SEN | 30 |
| D03-WP9 | NEB Systemic Narratives | Update of the interactive platform to include new learnings and increase outreach | WP9 | EIT CC GmbH | R | SEN | 36 |
| D04-WP9 | Transformation & NEB yearly report | Yearly report on the activities and outputs of the WP9 | WP9 | EIT CC GmbH | R | SEN | 13, 25, 37 |
| D05-WP5 | EITCC updated procurement policy | Updated procurement policies fully compliant with the EIT Guidelines on KICs procurement policies | WP5 | EIT CC GmbH | R | SEN | 5 |

### 3.1d - List of Milestones

***Table 3.1d - List of Milestones***

| Mile-stone number | Milestone name | Related work package(s) | Due date (in month) | Means of verification |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| M1 | Launch of first open calls | WP1, WP2, WP3 | 3 | Call documentation published, platform live |
| M2 | First FS Revenue Collection Period | WP7, WP8 | 6 | Report on contributions and invoicing |
| M3 | Mid-term evaluation of RIS model | WP4 | 18 | Evaluation report validated by RIS task force |
| M4 | Initial Impact Story Compilation | WP6 | 15 | Published compilation on public platform |
| M5 | EIT Label Quality Review | WP2 | 27 | External reviewer's feedback report submitted |
| M6 | EIT Culture & Creativity Investment Network Annual Update | WP3 | 12 | Investor network activity report and updated partner list published |
| M7 | Governance Framework Review | WP5 | 24 | Summary report of governance model refinements |
| M8 | Mid-Term NEB Impact Assessment | WP9 | 21 | Impact report on NEB pilots and transformation activities |
| M9 | CRM System Upgrade Finalised | WP6 | 9 | CRM system deployed and tested, usage and partner feedback report |
| M10 | First Gender Mainstreaming Monitoring Report | WP5 | 15 | Report submitted using EIT template |
| M11 | First NEB Systemic Narratives thematic exchanges | WP9 | 9 | Number of thematic exchanges on Systemic Narratives & related report / blog posts |
| M12 | Launch of Fashion Shift | WP9 | 10 | Projects have been selected through an open call and are ready to start |
| M13 | NEB Academy (capacity building) governance established with EIT Culture & Creativity in the advisory board | WP9 | 24 | EIT Culture & Creativity has a seat in the NEB Advisory Board |
| M14 | Identified relevant content for the final update of the NEB Systemic Narratives Report | WP9 | 30 | Data and qualitative indicators have been collected from all funded projects |

### 3.2 Capacity of participants and KIC partnership as a whole

**KIC Partnership and Membership Scheme**

EIT Culture & Creativity (EIT Culture & Creativity) operates an **open and inclusive membership model** designed to attract diverse actors across the Knowledge Triangle (education, research, business) and beyond. The **value proposition** for members includes:

- access to EIT Culture & Creativity calls, funding opportunities, and venture support mechanisms;
- participation in Strategic Topic Groups (STGs) and co-design of the KIC's agenda;
- use of the Digital Hub for matchmaking, knowledge-sharing, and community building;
- access to Co-location Centres (CLCs) and RIS Hubs for regional anchoring, pilot deployment, and stakeholder engagement.

The partnership currently integrates **universities, research institutes, SMEs, corporates, cities, regional authorities, and civil society organisations**. SMEs and creative startups are supported through business creation services, while municipalities and regional agencies co-finance pilots that link innovation to territorial development.

To address the **relative underrepresentation of certain creative sectors** (e.g. gaming, AV, fashion, architecture), the KIC will deploy a **targeted outreach strategy**. This includes appointing senior industry advisors as **sectoral spokespersons**, partnering with industry organisations, and participating in top-tier creative industry events. This will increase visibility, strengthen ties with creative communities, and expand membership during the BP period.

**Investors are not yet members of the partnership, but they are identified as a priority stakeholder group** for the next phase of development. Their engagement will be gradually built through **PPP creation and Financial Sustainability activities**, with outreach targeting family offices, philanthropic actors, and public-private funders relevant for the cultural and creative sectors.

Partners contribute directly to Business Plan implementation by **leading or co-leading sub-granted projects**, participating in **co-financed pilots**, and shaping the **education portfolio**. They also act as multipliers of **open science practices, gender mainstreaming, and citizen engagement**, ensuring that innovation remains socially and culturally embedded.

**Integration of the Knowledge Triangle and Inclusiveness**

The KIC partnership ensures balanced representation across all three dimensions of the Knowledge Triangle:

- **Education:** universities and art schools deliver EIT-labelled Master's and PhD programmes, while vocational providers offer modular training to professionals.
- **Research:** cultural research centres and SSH experts design methodologies for societal impact assessment and co-creation.
- **Business:** SMEs, startups, and scaleups engage through accelerators, venture support instruments, and access to KIC services.

Beyond the traditional Knowledge Triangle, inclusiveness is strengthened through:

- **SSH integration:** cultural, behavioural, and social insights inform pilots and innovation design.
- **Open science:** partners apply open access publishing, data sharing, and citizen science methods where relevant.

- **Gender equality:** gender balance is targeted in programme participation, leadership roles, and curricular content, in line with the EIT Gender Equality Action Plan.

Access to **CLCs and RIS Hubs** ensures that all partners, regardless of location, are connected to regional innovation ecosystems and can benefit from KIC services

**Contribution of Partnership Diversity to Innovation and Results**

The diversity of the partnership enables EIT Culture & Creativity to cover the **entire innovation value chain**:

- **Idea generation and research** (universities, cultural research institutions).
- **Education and skills development** (EIT-labelled degrees, professional courses).
- **Prototype and venture development** (SMEs, startups, accelerators).
- **Market and societal uptake** (corporates, municipalities, cultural institutions, NGOs).

This diversity ensures that innovations are not only **technologically feasible**, but also **socially relevant, market-ready, and policy-aligned**. By connecting small creative actors with larger institutional stakeholders, EIT Culture & Creativity builds a **pipeline of impact-oriented innovations** that directly address the societal challenge of cultural and creative transformation.

**Specific Details of Business Plan Implementation (2026–2028)**

Compared with the **Strategic Agenda 2021–2027**, several adjustments in legal structure and governance are foreseen to enhance **efficiency and accountability** during 2026-2028:

- **Supervisory Board and Executive Board (SB & EB):** These will operate in a leaner structure, with clearer division of roles between **strategic oversight** (C-Level and Supervisory Board) and **operational delivery** (C-Level Executive staff). To strengthen this model, the KIC will recruit a **Chief Operating Officer (COO)** to ensure robust operational management and portfolio delivery, and a **Chief Outreach & Marketing Officer (COMO)** to consolidate **partnership development, outreach, branding, and stakeholder engagement** across Europe. Both roles are critical to the KIC's Financial Sustainability pathway: the **COO ensures efficient delivery and reporting of projects, including NEFAs**, while the **COMO drives strategic outreach and partnerships essential for PPP development and diversification of funding sources**.
- **Governance and Operational Management:** In line with EIT governance expectations and recommendations from the EIT Governing Board, EIT Culture & Creativity will further strengthen the distinction between strategic oversight, partner representation, and operational management through a lean and clearly structured governance model. The Supervisory Board (SB) will provide strategic oversight and guidance to the KIC Legal Entity (GmbH), while the Executive Board (EB) of the association (e.V.) will represent and coordinate the interests of the partner network within the non-profit association structure. The operational management of the GmbH will focus on efficient implementation, portfolio delivery, financial sustainability, and ecosystem development. To support the transition towards a more diversified and financially sustainable funding model, the KIC will progressively reinforce operational and management capacities in areas such as portfolio coordination, stakeholder engagement, partnership development, communication, outreach, and financial sustainability. These capacities are essential for ensuring high-quality project implementation, effective management of NEFA and large-scale portfolios, stronger European visibility, and the development of strategic partnerships and PPPs contributing to the diversification of funding sources and the long-term sustainability of the KIC.
- **Executive staff:** These will operate with clarified roles in **finance, operations, engagement, and business creation**, ensuring accountability, responsiveness to partner needs, and stronger alignment with the KIC's Financial Sustainability strategy.

- **Co-location Centres (CLCs) and Regional Hubs:** These will adopt **performance-based monitoring**, with clear KPIs (co-financing ratio, ventures supported, RIS impact, membership growth). Underperforming hubs may be restructured or consolidated to ensure efficiency and impact.
- **KIC Legal Entity (LE):** This will retain direct responsibility for **governance, compliance, financial management, equity agreements, and marketing/branding/communication**, ensuring consistency and accountability across all regions.

These changes ensure that the KIC partnership remains **agile, transparent, and financially sustainable**, while safeguarding inclusiveness and broad representation across Europe.

**NEFA and Complementary Funding Capacity**

The partnership is also positioned to attract **Non-EIT Funded Activities (NEFA)**, reinforcing financial resilience and complementing EIT-funded operations. NEFAs will be mobilised from **Horizon Europe, Creative Europe, Erasmus+, Interreg, national funds, and philanthropic sources**, in line with Annex 5 of the Model Grant Agreement and EIT NEFA Guidelines.

- NEFA activities will prioritise **infrastructure co-investment, education pathways, strategic pilots, and RIS capacity-building**, creating synergies with the KIC portfolio.
- A **monitoring mechanism** ensures alignment, avoids overlaps, and demonstrates strategic additionality.

**SMART Target:** *By 2028, NEFAs will generate at least EUR 5 million in complementary revenues, representing a minimum of 20% of the KIC's non-EIT income, with activities tracked annually to ensure alignment and additionality.*
By integrating NEFAs into the activity mix, the partnership not only strengthens its capacity but also contributes directly to the **Financial Sustainability targets by 2028**.