European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT): strategic innovation agenda 2021-2027

2019/0152(COD) - 27/04/2021 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 673 votes to 6, with 20 abstentions, a legislative resolution on the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Strategic Innovation Agenda of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) 2021-2027: Boosting the Innovation Talent and Capacity of Europe.

Parliament's position adopted at first reading under the ordinary legislative procedure amends the Commission's proposal as follows:

The Strategic Innovation Agenda (SIA) complements the legislative framework for the functioning of the EIT for the years 2021 to 2027. It sets out the priority fields and strategy of the EIT for the period 2021-2027 by defining the EIT's objectives, key actions, mode of operation, expected results and resources needed.

The SIA 2021-2027 should:

- ensure the coherence of the EIT with Horizon Europe as well as consistency with EU priorities and commitments, including those related to the European Green Deal, the Recovery Plan for Europe, the European strategy for data, the SME Strategy for a sustainable and digital Europe and the New Industrial Strategy for Europe and those related to achieving the Union's strategic autonomy, while retaining an open economy;

- contribute to tackling global and societal challenges, including the Sustainable Development Goals by following the principles of the Paris Agreement adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and to achieving a net-zero greenhouse gas economy by 2050 at the latest.

Raising the bar

The EIT should continue to support Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) to strengthen innovation ecosystems that address global and societal challenges.

It should do this by promoting the integration of higher education, research and innovation to create environments conducive to innovation. It aims to support a new generation of entrepreneurs, helping to reduce the gender gap in innovative business creation, with a focus on SMEs.

The EIT's specific objectives for 2021-2027 should be to:

- increase the openness, impact and transparency of the KICs and the integration of the knowledge triangle across the EU;

- increase the entrepreneurial and innovation capacity of higher education across Europe by promoting and supporting institutional change in HEIs and the integration of HEIs in innovation ecosystems;

- increase the regional and local outreach of the EIT and the KICs, in particular by including a wider range of stakeholders in order to address disparities in innovation capacity and to enhance knowledge and innovation diffusion across the EU.

The European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) is an integral part of Horizon Europe, the future EU framework programme for research and innovation. The EIT's budget for the years 2021-2027 (as provided for in the Horizon Europe regulation) amounts to EUR 2.96 billion. The EIT's leading mission since 2008 is to contribute to sustainable European economic growth and competitiveness by reinforcing the innovation capacity of the Member States and of the EU as a whole by addressing societal challenges through innovation-driven knowledge integration between higher education, research and innovation (knowledge triangle). It brings together leading universities, research labs and companies to form pan-European partnerships, the so-called Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs), to help innovators and entrepreneurs across Europe turn their ideas into products and services for the market. Since 2010, the EIT has over the years launched eight KICs, each of them focusing on a different societal challenge (Climate, Digital, Food, Health, InnoEnergy, Manufacturing, Raw Materials, Urban Mobility).

In this context, the SIA:

- clarifies the scope of the new pilot phase to support the development of entrepreneurial and innovation capacities of higher education institutions;

- defines eligibility criteria and the budget to be allocated to activities under the Regional Innovation Scheme (RIS), which aims to extend the EIT's regional activities to low and medium-income innovative countries;

- provides for a simplified funding model for KICs, based on performance;

- establishes a system of continuous monitoring and evaluation of KICs, including closer monitoring of their openness, and clarifies the EIT's relationship with KICs after the termination of the Framework Partnership Agreement.

The EIT should ensure that the KICs continue to pursue financial sustainability, in order to achieve financial independence from the EIT grant at the latest after 15 years following their launch by leveraging public and private investment.

Launching new KICs

The EIT foresees a streamlined procedure for the launch of a new KIC in the cultural and creative sectors and industries in 2022 or 2023 and a second new KIC in the aquatic, marine and maritime sectors and ecosystems in 2026, taking into account the strategic planning process under Horizon Europe.

Tackling the crisis resulting from the outbreak of COVID-19

Major social, economic, environmental and technological changes arising from the COVID-19 crisis will require the collaboration of all Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies. The EIT should contribute to the necessary innovation efforts by providing a coherent response to the COVID-19 crisis.

The EIT should contribute to the necessary innovation efforts by providing a coherent response to the COVID-19 crisis. In particular, it should ensure that the KICs are able to operate with the necessary flexibility to adapt to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 crisis and to respond to unexpected new challenges and priorities.

Budgetary needs

The budgetary needs of the EIT over the period 2021-2027 amount to EUR 2 965 000 000 and cover: (1) expenditure for the expenses of the eight existing KICs and the launch of two new KICs; (2) EIT administrative expenses; and (3) the expenses related to preparation, monitoring, control, audit, evaluation

and other activities and expenses that are necessary for the management and implementation of the EIT activities, as well as for the evaluation of the achievement of its objectives. Around EUR 2 854 000 000 (96 % of the total EIT budget) is envisaged to fund existing and new KICs.