



YERUN Input to the Public Consultation on the Future of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT)

YERUN welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the discussion on the future of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) and its Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs).

Nearly two decades after its creation, and with a new Strategic Innovation Agenda and legislative framework ahead, this is an important moment to reconsider the role of the EIT within Europe's innovation landscape.

The objective remains highly relevant. Europe needs to make better use of the connections between education, research and innovation, and to translate knowledge more effectively into economic and societal value. This has become even more important in the context of Europe's renewed focus on competitiveness, technological capacity and strategic autonomy.

The question is therefore not whether the knowledge triangle matters, but how (and if) the EIT can best contribute to it. If the EIT is to retain a prominent role in supporting the knowledge triangle - connecting education, research and innovation- it must be able to mobilise the potential of the European higher education sector as a whole, rather than primarily benefiting a set of those.

YERUN has consistently raised this point. Since its first contribution to the EIT consultation in 2018, YERUN has called for greater openness of the KICs, with more opportunities for universities, and greater consistency across their rules and operating models. We have also strongly supported the development of the EIT HEI Initiative as a means of strengthening innovation capacity across the wider higher education sector.



Many of these messages remain relevant today. At the same time, the development of the wider EU innovation landscape – including the EIC and the proposed European Competitiveness Fund – makes it even more important to clarify where the EIT brings distinctive European added value compared to other initiatives.

Against this background, YERUN highlights four priorities for the future EIT.

1. Open the KICs to the wider higher education community

The KICs need to become more open, accessible and inclusive.

The current membership model, including substantial membership fees, limits the capacity of many universities to participate fully. Yet excellent ideas, technologies, entrepreneurial capacity and connections to regional innovation ecosystems exist across the European higher education landscape, with potential and relevance for the KIC structures.

Openness should therefore go beyond the participation opportunities currently provided through the EIT Regional Innovation Scheme or the EIT HEI Initiative. Universities across Europe have meaningful opportunities to connect to KIC ecosystems and contribute to their activities. Moreover, all universities must serve the knowledge economy in order to be meaningful and sustainable.

YERUN therefore reiterates its call for periodic and transparent opening of KIC partnerships, supported by clear and more consistent procedures for institutions wishing to participate.

This is important not only from an inclusion perspective. Opening the KICs would enlarge the pool of knowledge, talent, expertise and partnerships available to Europe's innovation ecosystems and would strengthen their capacity to connect universities, companies, entrepreneurs and investors across borders.

2. Reinforce the KICs as European innovation networks

The next EU budget will bring together a wider range of instruments supporting research, innovation, deployment and competitiveness. In this context, the EIT should have a clearly identifiable role and avoid unnecessary duplication with other EU instruments.

In particular, YERUN questions the added value of maintaining multiple KIC-level innovation grant schemes where comparable financing opportunities are or will be available through the EIC, Horizon Europe/FP10 and the future European Competitiveness Fund.

For universities, one of the strongest assets of the KICs is their capacity to bring actors together. A recognised added value for universities for taking membership in KICs undeniably lies in its facilitating potential for consortium building. KICs can provide valuable environments for connecting universities with companies, entrepreneurs and other innovation actors; identifying opportunities for knowledge valorisation; and connecting ideas and technologies with the expertise

and partners needed to take them further.

This **network function** should be recognised and strengthened. The KICs have the capacity to act as a European connector between knowledge, talent, business and innovation ecosystems. For precisely this reason, access to these networks should not remain concentrated among a relatively limited group of institutions. A stronger network function must go hand in hand with greater openness.

3. Continue the EIT HEI Initiative – while reconsidering how it is managed

YERUN strongly supported the creation of the EIT HEI Initiative and continues to see clear value in it.

The initiative has helped higher education institutions strengthen their innovation and entrepreneurial capacity, exchange practices and embed entrepreneurship and knowledge valorisation more systematically within institutional strategies and education. Its continuation should therefore be ensured.

However, its future governance deserves reconsideration. There is an inherent tension between an initiative intended to reach the wider higher education sector and an implementation model linked to KIC structures and membership requirements.

The next programming period offers an opportunity to consider whether the KICs remain the most appropriate structures to manage the initiative or whether it could be implemented by a EU-managed programme that could offer a more standardised and familiar framework for universities while preserving the initiative's focus on institutional innovation capacity.

Whatever model is chosen, the objective should remain the same: enabling the benefits and expertise developed through the EIT ecosystem to reach the widest possible range of higher education institutions.

4. Simplify and harmonise the way the KICs operate

Finally, greater consistency across KICs remains necessary.

Universities engaging with different KICs still encounter different instruments, terminology, grant arrangements, contractual requirements, membership models and communication practices. This creates unnecessary complexity and makes the EIT landscape difficult to navigate, particularly for newcomers.

YERUN therefore calls for greater harmonisation of instruments, grants, regulations, rules, procedures, contractual arrangements and terminology across the KICs, without forgetting other means of communication and dissemination (e.g. websites, etc.).

A common and understandable language would make the EIT more accessible to actors inside and outside existing KIC communities. More consistent rules and stronger common monitoring and

evaluation arrangements would also reduce administrative complexity and facilitate compliance with EU financial and ethical requirements.

A clearer mission for the EIT

The review of the EIT should ultimately answer a fundamental question: what is the distinctive contribution that the EIT makes to Europe's future research and innovation ecosystem?

For YERUN, its strongest potential lies in connecting the different parts of the knowledge triangle and building bridges between universities, businesses, entrepreneurs, investors and innovation ecosystems across Europe. But we also see that the EIT's mission is not clear and this consultation period needs to be serious about overcoming that.

Whether the future EIT becomes a more focused structure or is given a broader role, clarity of mission must come first. Furthermore, its instruments should complement rather than duplicate other EU programmes, its procedures should become simpler and more coherent, and participation in its networks should be considerably more open.

Europe needs all its universities to contribute to innovation and competitiveness. The future EIT should help unlock that potential across the entire European higher education landscape.

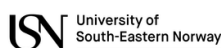
Previous YERUN positions on the EIT

- **December 2018** – [YERUN contribution to the EIT Open Consultation](#). YERUN called for the right balance between the EIT as a funding instrument and as an institutional network, greater openness of the KICs, and wider opportunities for higher education institutions to benefit from EIT innovation ecosystems.
- **September 2019** – [Inclusive and open: this is how the EIT could support innovative higher education all over Europe](#). In response to the proposed EIT Regulation and Strategic Innovation Agenda 2021–2027, YERUN called for more inclusive and participatory KICs, periodic opening of KIC partnerships, harmonised rules across KICs, and adequate investment in innovation capacity development across the higher education sector.
- **November 2019** – [A dedicated action for the EIT to promote innovation capacity development in European Higher Education? Yes, please!](#) YERUN strongly supported the creation of a dedicated action to strengthen universities' innovation and entrepreneurial capacity, while stressing that its benefits should extend beyond institutions already participating in KICs.
- **April 2020** – [YERUN proposed amendments to the EIT legislative proposals](#). YERUN proposed concrete amendments aimed at strengthening the openness and transparency of KICs, facilitating the inclusion of new partners, improving monitoring and evaluation, and ensuring that the EIT remained focused on its core innovation mission.

- About YERUN -

YERUN - Young European Research Universities Network - founded in 2015 and based in Brussels, brings together excellence and value-driven young research universities. The network's objective is to strategically represent its members in the decision-making process at EU level, thus shaping their future and promoting their role in European societies. Further to its policy advocacy activity, the network also strengthens cooperation opportunities among its members in areas of mutual interest and raises their visibility via a dedicated communication strategy.

- YERUN Members -



YERUN, Young European Research Universities Network, September 2026

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