

Feedback opportunity for the work programme 2025

European Innovation Ecosystems (EIE)

Destination 1: CONNECT - Interconnected Innovation Ecosystems

Draft expected impacts:

- Interconnected, inclusive, and more efficient innovation ecosystems across the EU that draw on the existing strengths of European, national, regional, and local ecosystems and engage new, less well-represented stakeholders and less advanced innovation territories to set, undertake, and achieve collective ambitions tackling challenges for the benefit of society, including green, digital, and social transitions, and advancing the European Research Area and the New European Innovation Agenda;
- Enhanced cross-border network connectivity and inter-regional collaboration for more equal innovation performance in the EU with more connections between more and less innovative regions building on strategic areas of regional strength and specialisation to create and renew European value chains in areas most relevant for the sustainable green and digital transition and the EU's open strategic autonomy, including the five "burning challenges" as defined in the New European Innovation Agenda;
- Enhanced experimentation capacity and creation of common tools at pan-European level to foster innovation deployment and enable innovation to be scaled up at EU level;
- Effective adoption of co-creation models to stimulate SMEs' response to public and private procurers' needs and challenges;
- Increase innovation co-investments, fostering synergies and other funding leverages;
- Improved innovation policy coordination and networking activities of the Member States and Associated Countries through the EIC Forum.

Main expected outcomes:

- Joint long-term programmes and action plans fostering collaboration, common innovation-support activities, and the creation of common knowledge assets among EU, national, regional and/or local level innovation ecosystems, enhancing synergies and complementarities of their programmes and encouraging the alignment of their innovation policies and related policies impacting innovation in line with the new European Innovation Agenda;
- Inclusion of all key innovation players from across the quadruple helix, and all EU territories based notably on their respective national/regional smart specialisation strategies; Open dialogue, prepare the ground and facilitate the agreement among Member States, Associated Countries, and/or their regions, in cooperation with the private sector and research and innovation actors, towards more dynamic, inclusive, gender diverse, and connected innovation ecosystems, via co-planning, co-funding and co-implementation in line with the New European Innovation Agenda;
- Enhanced synergies, cooperation and cross-border connectedness among European innovation ecosystems around strategic areas and technologies, including the "burning challenges" as defined in the New European Innovation Agenda, and particularly Regional Innovation Valleys;

- Better links between innovation 'leaders' and 'strong' innovator regions with 'moderate' and 'emerging' innovator regions across the EU and Associated Countries ;
- Increased innovation capabilities, including in deep tech in Member States and Associated Countries, allowing innovators to bring their ideas to the market and enable innovations to be scaled up at EU level, facilitating the link with private investors, fostering partnerships with the private sector (e.g. corporates) and other research and innovator actors;
- More innovation co-investments, mobilising other funding leverages, including European, national or regional public funds and/or other private funds (investors, foundations, etc.), to complement Horizon Europe support;
- Increased participation of all innovation ecosystems actors across EU territories in technology and industrial value chains (existing and emerging ones) relevant to the EU burning challenges to achieve broader sustainability and the EU's open strategic autonomy.
- Promotion of women's participation and leadership in innovation, including the deep tech industry, to build fairer, more gender-inclusive, and more prosperous innovation ecosystems in the European Union;
- Improved competence of the public buyers in the area of innovation procurement through the support of the networks of national competence centers.

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Destination 2: INNOVSMEs – Partnership on Innovative SMEs

Draft expected impacts:

The European Innovation Ecosystems work programme aims to create and expand more connected, inclusive, and efficient innovation ecosystems that support the scaling of companies and spur innovation to address important challenges in a responsible way, as laid out in the New European Innovation Agenda.

The destination INNOVSMEs will help innovative SMEs to grow and successfully access European and international markets and to embed in global value chains by:

- Contributing to the strategic priorities of the European Commission with a special focus on the 'European Green Deal' and 'An economy that works for people' including to pursue actions of the New European Innovation Agenda (NEIA) that apply to Innovative SMEs.
- Strengthening the innovation performance, output, potential and resilience of the European innovation ecosystem;
- Addressing the productivity and internationalisation gap between innovative SMEs and large companies and aiming to improve SMEs' global scale-up potential leading to increased employment and turnover;
- Leveraging investment for innovative SMEs.

Main expected outcomes:

- Improved knowledge transfer in the European innovative Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) ecosystem, through increased and sustained collaboration between SMEs, public research partners and academia;
- Mitigation of difficulties in access to finance for European innovative SMEs and thus contribute to enhanced growth and expansion of European innovative SMEs;
- Improved European innovative SME access to new international markets or value chains thus leading to improved market share and sales for European innovative SMEs increasing their employment capacity;
- Increased public research and innovation funding to European innovative SMEs, to spur more high-quality collaborations and more innovative solutions;
- Pull together national efforts to spur internationalisation and collaboration in European innovative SMEs, avoiding unnecessary duplication leading to a simplified offer to beneficiaries, achieving a more balanced geographic participation, ensuring complementarity and improved innovation ecosystems across Europe;
- Identified and better exploited existing or emerging opportunities in the global markets and establish win-win international innovation partnerships, such as networks of incubators and accelerators with the help of the INNOWWIDE instrument and other existing support mechanisms.