

# ANNUAL PLAN 2024

## INNOVATION & INVESTMENT WORKING GROUP

### STRATEGIC CLUSTER

#### WORKING GROUP LEADERS

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#### OBJECTIVES

The Innovation & Investment Working Group aims to monitor the main initiatives put in place by the European institutions under the priority 'an economy that works for the people' and explicitly target SMEs. The Working Group monitors industrial and cluster policy developments and promotes instruments that support innovative financing (e.g., cascade funding financial instruments).

#### CONTEXT

The newly established development area of the Management Board on Entrepreneurship is an opportunity to create synergies between this Working group and other strategic and thematic domains, with three principal development axes.

- The European Innovation Council
  - EIC Forum Working Groups
  - Governance of the EIC (programme manager, board member, board director)
  - Dedicated funding opportunities for Regions and ecosystems in place to support applicants
  - Deep tech – and how it is defined and guiding the EIC funding
- Ecosystem approach to link research and industrial policy in EU Regions
  - ERA Action 12 - 'Accelerate the green/digital transition of Europe's key industrial ecosystems'
  - European Cluster Collaboration Platform activities
  - European Cluster Alliance
  - Single Market programme to be monitored further
  - Industrial Forum and Industrial Policy
  - PRI

- Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform (STEP) and Strategic Autonomy
  - European Defence Industrial Strategy
  - Potentially interesting opportunities in the European Innovation Ecosystems Work Programme
- Coordination with other ERRIN Working Groups

With the cross-cutting nature of the Innovation and Investment domains, there will be collaboration with other Working Groups.

## ACTIVITIES

### **Kick-starting 2024: Towards R&I and cohesion policies post-2027**

**Date:** January

**Cluster Activity:** *with the Policy WG, Science and Education for Society WG & S3 WG*

Organised by the Policy WG, the meeting will also serve to learn more about the planned activities for 2024 of the ERRIN strategic cluster working groups: Policy, Smart Specialisation, Innovation & Investment and Science & Education for Society.

This meeting will invite representatives of Commission's high-level groups on Horizon and on the future of cohesion policy to discuss the regional dimension in R&I policy, and R&I dimension in cohesion policy post-2027, as well as the state of play of the process of developing both policies – as some of the main topics of interest emphasised by members in the Annual Member Survey.

It will also be a chance to talk about coherence between the policies at a time when we are awaiting the report with recommendations of the high-level group on cohesion, while the group focusing on Horizon started its activities only in December.

### **Follow-up on the EIC activities**

**Date: April**

Following the meetings organised with the President of the Board in 2023, the I&I WG would like to continue monitoring the developments of the EIC. In the context of the mid-term evaluation of Horizon Europe, the WG would like to reflect on the first results of the EIC and look ahead to its future under FP10 (what should be continued, changed, improved).

The meeting could also address issues related to the "plug-in" scheme and how to better promote synergies between regional initiatives and the EIC. Another key element of the meeting could be to provide an overview of the definition of DeepTech within the EIC and its coherence with other EU regulations.

### **EU Innovation Fund: factors determining successful applications**

**Date: June**

With a budget of €4 billion in 2024 and around €40 billion euros for the 2020 to 2030 period, the Innovation Fund calls, funded by revenues from the EU Emissions Trading System (EU ETS), are open to small, medium and large-scale projects and cover sectors including decarbonisation, cleantech manufacturing, and maritime and energy-intensive industries. The Innovation Fund is of interest to a large group of potential applicants involved with projects with significant CO<sub>2</sub> reduction objectives. However, many potential applicants struggle to determine if they are within the scope of the Fund with good chances of success. Completing an Innovation Fund application requires significant resources, which can be a genuine barrier to application.

The WG will organise a meeting to explore which projects are the best fit for the Innovation Fund: What are the main factors determining the match? What are the essential questions potential applicants should be asking themselves? What are the characteristics of projects with a good shot at a successful application?

The objective is to raise awareness about the targeted projects in the Innovation Fund to facilitate applications from relevant projects and specifically to understand better how to determine whether a project is a good match with the Fund.