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Position from Innovation Norway on the future of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT)

Innovation Norway is a state-owned company and the national innovation agency of Norway.

At the core of Innovation Norway's assignment lies the expectation of value creation by stimulating growth within profitable business development throughout Norway. Innovation Norway's programmes and services are designed to create more successful entrepreneurs, more enterprises with capacity for growth and more innovative business clusters. The agency provides loans, grants, competence programmes and advice. Innovation Norway is also a formal innovation policy adviser to the government. With its nationwide office network and thirty offices abroad, Innovation Norway is able to meet customers in their business environment and abroad. Innovation Norway is owned by the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Fisheries (51%) and the county authorities (49%).

For the revision of the Regulation (EC) No 294/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council that established the EIT, Innovation Norway would like to put forward the following recommendations:

- **Ensure synergies with national and European programmes**
- **Explicit inclusion of associated countries**
- **Strengthen business involvement and outreach activities**
- **Full transparency in selection processes**
- **Support for a new KIC on "Water, marine and maritime"**

Innovation Norway supports the overall objective of the EIT to reinforce the EU's innovation capacity "by promoting synergies and operation among higher education, research and innovation of the highest standards, including by fostering entrepreneurship." We agree that enhancing networking and cooperation and create synergies between innovation communities in Europe is necessary to succeed with this objective.

Synergies

Innovation Norway would like to emphasize the importance of clearly identifying the contribution and complementary value each KIC is meant to have also in view of the launch of Horizon Europe. Innovation Norway support the inclusion of the EIT in the Open Innovation Pillar. However, we believe that the new European Innovation Council should be given the flexibility to develop initiatives and that the EIT should build its services to ensure synergies with the EIC. There is a growing need to identify and clarify synergies, including possible collaboration with other innovation related activities.

Innovation Norway would like to highlight the importance to avoid overlap with:

- Activities under the EIC: The pathfinder and the accelerator
- The new mission instruments
- Instruments under the Digital Europe Programme: Digital Innovation Hubs
- Actions under the thematic clusters

The role of associated countries

Innovation Norway stresses that the regulation should not refer only to “member states”, but it should take into consideration countries that are associated to Horizon 2020. The table below suggests changes that avoid exclusion of states that are contributing financially to the program and that have the same participation rights as EU member states.

| From the regulation | Suggested change |
|---|---|
| Art. 5 (k) A meeting of the Stakeholder Forum shall be convened at least once a year. Member States’ representatives shall meet in a special configuration, (...) The special configuration of Member States’ representatives within the Stakeholder Forum shall also (...) | Art. 5 (k) A meeting of the Stakeholder Forum shall be convened at least once a year. Member States’ representatives shall meet in a special configuration, (...) The special configuration of Member States’ and associated countries representatives within the Stakeholder Forum shall also (...) |
| Art. 5 (e) encourage the recognition in the Member States of degrees and diplomas which are awarded by higher education institutions that are partner organisations and which may be labelled EIT degrees and diplomas; | Art. 5 (e) encourage the recognition in the Member States and associated countries of degrees and diplomas which are awarded by higher education institutions that are partner organisations and which may be labelled EIT degrees and diplomas; |
| Art. 7 (3) The minimum condition to form a KIC is the participation of at least three partner organisations, established in at least three different Member States. | Art. 7 (3) The minimum condition to form a KIC is the participation of at least three partner organisations, established in at least three different Member States and associated countries . |
| Art. 7 (4) In addition to the condition set out in paragraph 3, at least two thirds of the partner organisations forming a KIC shall be established in the Member States. | Art. 7 (4) In addition to the condition set out in paragraph 3, at least two thirds of the partner organisations forming a KIC shall be established in the Member States and associated countries . |
| Art. 11) The EIT shall be a Community body and shall have legal personality. In each of the Member States, it shall enjoy the widest possible legal capacity accorded to legal persons under national legislation. | Art. 11) The EIT shall be a Community body and shall have legal personality. In each of the Member States and associated countries , it shall enjoy the widest possible legal capacity accorded to legal persons under national legislation. |

Transparency

Innovation Norway find it important to secure a fair, transparent and open procedure around the selection process for new projects to receive funding from the KICs, as well as for the selection of new KICs. The KICs should follow the same procedures as Horizon 2020, providing the applicants with Evaluation Summary Reports after the evaluation has been completed. Information on which projects that are selection for funding should be made available. We believe that the offerings of the different KICs should be more streamlined and we encourage easing the process of involving outside actors in the KICs. We would like to encourage the EIT and the KICs to make information on the EIT and the activities under each KIC more accessible for stakeholders. Furthermore, we recommend strengthening the efforts to monitor results and making accessible information on support granted by the KICs.

Business involvement

In the report by the European Court of Auditors (2016) it is stated that the business community should be strongly involved at the strategic and operational levels for the EIT to be a success. Innovation Norway strongly supports this viewpoint. We agree that the EIT should set a clear target for SME participation. In addition, we support a stronger involvement of industry clusters in the KICs.

Innovation Norway encourages broad dissemination of the activities under each KIC. Information on open calls should be accessible to companies in regions that are not directly involved in the KIC. Innovation Norway believes that openness is necessary for fulfilling the EIT's ambition of being pan-European network instead of regional hubs and avoiding the risk of closed clubs. We also recommend closer cooperation between the EIT KICs and organisations with strong links to the business and industry sector, such as European innovation agencies, NCPs as well as Enterprise Europe Network.

Future thematic areas

Innovation Norway welcomes the suggested thematic area of "Water, marine and maritime". Healthy seas and oceans provide the livelihood, food security and economic prosperity of hundreds of millions of people. However, the coastal and marine ecosystems are facing an increasing number of threats. Overfishing (including illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing), marine pollution (including from plastic litter), climate change (including ocean warming, acidification, sea-level rise and extreme weather events) are affecting communities globally. We agree that it is crucial to create sustainable, circular and blue economies that are based on healthy water and marine ecosystems.

Innovation Norway would like to emphasize the importance of ensuring synergies between a potential KIC on maritime and oceans and other instruments under Horizon Europe. We believe that there are shortcomings in how the framework programmes address the ocean industries. Furthermore, we believe that there is a potential for nurturing crossovers between different ocean-based sectors as well as from these industries to other sectors. Establishing a new KIC could help facilitate a more wholesome approach to the maritime sector, as well as being a platform for which one could feed into the clusters as well as to an ocean focused mission, should it be implemented. In that sense, a new KIC focusing on "water, marine and maritime" would be in a unique position by being able to address all pillars and all clusters in forthcoming Horizon Europe.