**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**

**F o r t h e G o v e r n a n c e o f t h e**

**E I T C o m m u n i t y R I S H u b s**

January 2024

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1. **INTRODUCTION**

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is established to define the governance framework for the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) Community Regional Innovation Scheme (RIS) Hubs (referred to hereafter as the “**EIT Community RIS Hubs**” or “**EIT CRH**”) in the country of [xxxxxxx].

The MOU aims to delineate the roles, responsibilities, and cooperative mechanisms among the EIT CRH members of the country, including EIT Community Officers (referred to hereafter as “**ECO**”), former and present-day RIS Hubs entities as well as their relationship with the EIT Knowledge and Innovation Communities’ Co-location Centres (CLCs).

This MOU acknowledges and integrates the 'EIT RIS Hubs Minimum Standards and Guiding Principles' as the foundational framework for the operations and interactions of the EIT Community RIS Hubs. It is important to emphasize that while this MOU seeks to delineate the cooperative relationships and responsibilities among the parties, it does not supersede or modify the 'EIT RIS Hubs Minimum Standards and Guiding Principles'. In instances of any ambiguity or potential conflict between this MOU and the 'EIT RIS Hubs Minimum Standards and Guiding Principles', the latter shall take precedence. This ensures that the core standards and guiding principles of the EIT RIS Hubs are consistently upheld as the primary directive in all collaborative endeavours and agreements detailed herein.

The MOU covers the basic operational and governance aspects of the EIT Community RIS Hubs, focusing on collaborative efforts, good conduct and conflicts of interest, conflict resolution, data management, and basic coordination among members. It is intended to facilitate effective and efficient operations across the EIT Community RIS Hubs, enhancing their collective impact on regional innovation.

While all parties commit to adhering to these standards and principles in their activities and collaborations, it is expressly acknowledged that this MOU complements, and does not supersede, any current agreements already in force between the parties. The terms of this MOU are intended to enhance and work in conjunction with such existing agreements, ensuring a cohesive and harmonized approach to the collective objectives within the EIT Community.

This MOU shall be effective from the date of its signature and will remain in force as long as the EIT Community RIS Hub is in place. The terms and conditions of this MOU may be periodically reviewed and revised as necessary to reflect changes in the EIT Community RIS Hubs' operational environment or strategic objectives.

1. **DEFINITIONS**

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| --- | --- |
| *Co-location Centre (CLC)* | Also referred to as 'Innovation Hub', it is established by each Knowledge and Innovation Community (KIC) to carry out various activities. It serves as a focal point for local and regional innovation and entrepreneurship activities within the EIT framework. |
| *EIT Community Officer (ECO)* | An individual appointed to represent and coordinate the activities of the EIT Community RIS Hubs at a country level. |
| *EIT Community RIS Hub (EIT CRH)* | EIT Community RIS Hub is a coordination mechanism, providing local innovators with a unified source of information on all services and opportunities offered by the entire EIT Community, both locally and internationally. It serves as a centralised gateway, for local innovators, to all EIT KICs, irrespective of their local on-the-ground representation. Members of an EIT Community RIS HUB may be EIT Community Officers, RIS Hubs and Thematic Country Experts, among others. |
| *EIT Community Strategic Regional Innovations Cluster (SRI Cluster)* | A joint action of several KICs, funded by the EIT, to implement cross-sectoral activities to boost innovation in Europe’s emerging economies, including those countries eligible for support under the EIT Regional Innovation Scheme (RIS). EIT Community SRI Cluster oversees the establishment of the network of the EIT Community RIS Hubs across Europe and monitors their performance. |
| *EIT RIS HUBS Minimum Standards and Guiding Principles* | A set of foundational guidelines and criteria outlining the strategic approach for the establishment and operation of EIT RIS Hubs. The document is available in this [link](https://eit.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ris_hubs_minimum_standards_and_guiding_principles_final_agreement.pdf).[[1]](#footnote-2) |
| *Knowledge and Innovation Community (KIC)* | Knowledge and Innovation Community of the EIT namely: EIT Climate-KIC, EIT Culture and Creativity, EIT Digital, EIT Food, EIT Health, EIT Innoenergy, EIT Manufacturing, EIT RawMaterials, or EIT Urban Mobility. |
| *Lead KIC* | Primary KIC within a specific EIT CRH that takes the lead role in coordination and decision-making processes. This entity is responsible for guiding the strategic direction, facilitating collaboration among participating KICs, and ensuring alignment with overarching objectives. |
| *Lead KIC Officer* | Officer of the Lead KIC appointed by such Lead KIC as a single point of contact (SPOC) person for the relevant EIT CRH. |
| *National Contact Points (NCP)* | Network of NCPs is the main structure to provide guidance, practical information and assistance on all aspects of participation in Horizon Europe. NCPs are also established in many non-EU and non-associated countries ("third countries"). |
| *Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialization (RIS3)* | Policy framework developed by the European Union (EU) to enhance the regional innovation and economic growth. It encourages regions and member states to identify their unique strengths, assets, and competitive advantages as well as foster innovation-driven growth. |
| *RIS Hub* | As defined in the EIT RIS HUBS Minimum Standards and Guiding Principles, EIT KICs operational arms representing EIT KICs in given countries. These hubs act as focal points for the KIC’s activities and for the mobilization of local knowledge triangle actors in a Member State or associated country targeted by the RIS. |
| *Steering Committee (SRI Cluster)* | Group of designated members of the KICs that participate in the EIT Community SRI Cluster, entrusted with the tasks of providing guidance related to strategy and business planning, events planning, company policy and objectives, budgetary control, resource allocation and similar matters in relation to the EIT Community SRI Cluster. |
| *Thematic Country Expert* | Experts (entities or individuals) with experience in working with business, education and research organizations or who are experienced in integrating business, education and research activities, and have a contractual relation with a KIC delivering such related tasks. |

1. **MEMBERSHIP AND BENEFITS**
   1. **Criteria for Membership**

Entities eligible for the EIT Community RIS Hub membership can be: RIS Hubs, the ECO, CLCs, the NCP, and Thematic Country Experts (only one TCE per KIC, and only in case the KIC does not have a local RIS Hub or CLC). Other entities not running activities on behalf of the EIT KICs will not be considered eligible for membership, despite they can play a role as advisors.

Membership to the EIT Community RIS Hub does not entail paying any economic fees.

ECOs, RIS Hubs and Thematic Country Experts are selected by and have contractual relation with the KICs through open, transparent and competitive procedures.[[2]](#footnote-3) KICs are responsible for the assessment of the candidate's qualifications, their commitment to innovation and entrepreneurship, and their alignment with the EIT's strategic goals in line with their own procedures.

Once appointed as ECOs, RIS Hubs, or Thematic Country Experts, these individuals or entities, together with CLCs, become members of the EIT Community RIS Hub upon signature of this MOU. This comes with the responsibility to adhere to the policies and standards of the EIT Community RIS Hub, regulated in the EIT RIS HUBS Minimum Standards and Guiding Principles, in this Memorandum of Understanding and in any other document that the EIT, the KICs or the SRI Cluster may issue and of which members will be notified.

In case of infringement or breach of these standards, the SRI Cluster retains the authority to make decisions regarding the continuation of the members’ membership in the EIT CRH. Specifically, if a member causes any infringement that undermines the integrity or functioning of the EIT Community RIS Hub, the SRI Clusterholds the discretion to suspend or withdraw their membership and the associated rights. Notwithstanding, suspension or termination of their positions as ECOs, RIS Hubs or Thematic Country Experts is only made on the basis of their contractual relationships with the corresponding KIC.

* 1. **Rights and Benefits of Membership**

Members have the right to access to EIT's pan-European innovation network and benefit from the ECO’s activities. In particular members have the right to:

* participate in regular coordination meetings organized by the ECO,
* propose joint activities,
* provide comments to the yearly plan submitted by the ECO to the EIT Community SRI Cluster. Comments will be provided to the SRI Cluster, which holds the only authority to amend and approve the ECO yearly plans.
* be informed at least 2 weeks in advance and consulted about the ECO’s meetings with local authorities and public agencies,
* be informed by the ECO about the SRI Cluster feedback and final version of a yearly plan of the EIT CRH approved by the EIT Community SRI Cluster,
* be invited by the ECO to take part in meetings with stakeholders, governmental representatives and agencies relevant for the thematic sector covered by RIS Hub activities,
* be assisted by the ECO to establish contacts with KICs, new or existing partners, other EIT Community RIS Hubs,
* be updated by the ECO about identified collaboration and funding opportunities relevant for the thematic sector covered by RIS Hub or TCE activities.
* use of the EIT Community logo,
* participation in EIT-sponsored events and programmes
  1. **Member Representation and Participation**

Each EIT Community RIS Hub member is represented by a main contact person and an alternate.

A list of EIT Community RIS Hub members and their representatives is kept by Cluster SRI manager and updated according to the Steering Committee decisions.

1. **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

As integral parts of the EIT Community RIS Hubs, all members, regardless of their specific role, share a fundamental set of responsibilities essential for the effective functioning of the community.

Central to these responsibilities is the task of data consolidation and reporting. Each member plays a pivotal role in gathering, synthesizing, and communicating vital data and insights back to the ECO and the EIT itself.

This collective effort in data management is vital for informed decision-making within the EIT framework as it provides a comprehensive overview of local activities, progress, and outcomes, thereby ensuring a continuous and coherent flow of information. Such meticulous compilation and reporting of data significantly enhance the effectiveness of the EIT’s initiatives, underpinning the EIT Community’s commitment to a data-driven approach in its innovation and community development endeavours.

* 1. **EIT Community Officers (ECO)**

The ECO is a representative of EIT Community RIS Hubs and as such is equally supporting all EIT KICs in their activities at a country level. The ECO is responsible for tasks outlined in detail in the Annex of the EIT RIS HUBS Minimum Standards and Guiding Principles*,* specifically in the *"List of Tasks and Responsibilities of the National Secretary*", whichincludes a range of duties such as Administration, Coordination, Support, Communication and Financial Sustainability oriented tasks. These tasks ensure adherence to EIT standards and principles without exerting hierarchical control over RIS Hub entities and other EIT CRH members.

Crucially, the ECO will uphold the principle of equal representation and support for all EIT KICs. This means that the ECO is obligated to treat each KIC impartially, ensuring equitable support and representation. This duty extends beyond merely serving the Lead KIC or those with active representation in the country. The ECO is responsible for representing and serving all KICs and their stakeholders, regardless of whether they have an active member or representation in the country. This comprehensive approach underscores the role of the ECO as integral to the inclusive and unified functioning of the EIT Community.

In fulfilling their roles, the ECO will ensure that their activities are in harmony with, and do not duplicate or override, the functions of other active members within the EIT Community RIS Hub, including CLCs, RIS Hubs, and Thematic Country Experts. When potential role conflicts arise, the principle of prioritization shall apply, favouring the member entities such as CLCs and RIS Hubs, especially in critical areas like scouting for startups and engaging new partners. This approach is essential to preserve and prioritize the expertise and established roles of Thematic Country Experts within the EIT Community.

* + 1. *Administration Role*

In its role as administrators, the ECO is tasked with optimizing the information flow, data consolidation and exchange, as well as reporting of outcomes of the EIT Community activities. This role is critical in reducing administrative burdens of the EIT CRH members. The ECOs' administrative responsibilities encompass the following areas:

1. Keeping an up-to-date record of all entities which are members of the EIT CRH and ensuring they are signatories of this MOU;
2. Establishing good working relationships with all EIT Community RIS Hub members, other EIT KICs offices and local EIT KICs’ partners at both national and regional levels;
3. Setting up and maintaining a physical space in a location agreed upon by the EIT Community SRI Cluster and the EIT, where local stakeholders can access information about the EIT Community;
4. In consultation with the EIT Community RIS Hub members, and other EIT KIC Offices present in the same ecosystem, establish a smooth and efficient working method in particular including: regular status meetings (at least quarterly), usage of effective communication channels and tools to ensure information flow, effectively and efficiently collect data for standardized reporting and managing country section on EIT Community RIS platform;
5. Conduct activities agreed with all EIT Community RIS Hub members and other EIT KICs offices which limit the administrative burden on the EIT Community RIS Hub Members, and other EIT KIC Offices, while supporting their minimum functions;
6. Upon request, provide support to the EIT and the EIT KICs with navigating the local innovation landscape and ecosystem mapping.
   * 1. *Coordination Role*

In its role as coordinators, the ECO is tasked with optimizing the functioning of the EIT Community RIS Hubs by supporting strong relationships among members, facilitating orchestration of individual EIT KICs and their RIS Hubs working plans concerning targeted country and initiating joint synergetic activities. This role is critical in reducing coordination burdens and enhancing the overall efficacy of the EIT CRH. The ECO's coordination responsibilities encompass the following areas:

1. Developing a thorough understanding of the EIT model and staying updated with the activities of the KICs.
2. Establishing good working relationships with all EIT Community RIS Hub members and other EIT KIC offices at both national and regional levels.
3. To the greatest extent possible, ensure a coordinated approach amongst the EIT KICs’ RIS Hubs towards national authorities including relevant NCPs and managing authorities.
4. In consultation with the EIT Community RIS Hub members, and other EIT KIC Offices present in the same ecosystem, establish a smooth and efficient working method which limits the administrative burden on the EIT Community RIS Hub Members, and other EIT KIC Offices, while supporting their minimum functions.
5. Actively contribute to securing co-funding opportunities, including arranging meetings with relevant national/regional authorities. This role involves mediating between different stakeholders to ensure alignment with EIT objectives and facilitate cooperative solutions.
   * 1. *Support Role*

In its leadership capacity, the ECO plays a pivotal role in enhancing the effectiveness and reach of the EIT Community RIS Hubs. It is entrusted with the responsibility of identifying opportunities, leading collaborative efforts, and serving as a central point of contact for local stakeholders. Specifically, the ECO is tasked with the following key actions:

1. Scout for and recommend to the EIT KICs potential new partners.
2. Suggest and support, including, where appropriate and with the agreement of the EIT KICs, lead the implementation of possible joint activities amongst the EIT KICs, to be implemented nationally and / or regionally, aligned with relevant RIS3 priorities.
3. At the request of the EIT KICs, support any necessary updating of the local Country‐specific roadmap and support with its implementation, as appropriate.
4. Serve as a centralised contact gateway for local stakeholders to the EIT Community as a whole, and refer stakeholders to contact persons within other relevant EIT KICs, best suited to support their needs.
5. Identify the need for and facilitating the implementation of shared services for Hub Members with a view to improve efficiency.
6. Uphold the highest standards of integrity by guaranteeing no misuse of privileged information accessed in their capacity.
7. Undertake additional tasks in line with their contractual obligations as mandated by the EIT Management, which align with the EIT’s overarching objectives and the effective implementation of its Strategic Innovation Agenda, both supporting the work within the EIT Community RIS Hub.
8. Actively support implementation of KICs innovation, educational, business creation, policy dialogue and public engagement activities which were shifted and mandated to EIT Community Hub by EIT KIC providing closure or restructuring of KIC’s RIS Hub in a given country, moving tasks and funding to EIT Community Hub in line with the local Country‐specific roadmap and agreement between EIT KIC and EIT Community Hub Officer.
   * 1. *Communication role*

In their communication role, based on the crucial duty of information dissemination, The ECO is tasked with ensuring that all stakeholders are well-informed about the activities, events, results, and opportunities of the EIT KICs. Effective communication is key to the success of the EIT Community RIS Hubs, and The ECO is at the forefront of creating and maintaining open channels of information. The ECO is instrumental in orchestrating national-level events that align with and further the objectives of the EIT Community RIS Hubs. Their role in event management is not just about planning and execution but also involves enhancing the visibility and impact of the EIT Community through these events. Their responsibilities in this area include:

1. Designing appropriate methods and tools for information sharing and coordination to facilitate continuous exchange between Hub Community Members, EIT RIS Hubs, and other EIT KIC Offices. Communicate with EIT and the EC through the lead-KIC to avoid multiple cross-posting.
2. Actively and timely collecting and disseminating information about the KICs’ funding opportunities, events, and other initiatives organized or promoted by the KICs through applicable channels, ensuring its internal and external dissemination. In doing so, it is essential to maintain close coordination with the National Contact Point (NCP) to ensure the accuracy and relevance of the disseminated information. This includes the obligation to publicly disseminate all these activities and funding opportunities in a manner that is both timely and effective.
3. Managing and updating the EIT Community RIS Hub webpage, in the local language, with information on EIT Community activities and opportunities, including dedicated sections targeted towards specific stakeholders, including, students, start-ups, national authorities and so on.
4. Lead the organization of shared EIT Community awareness-raising events, including open days within the context of INNOVEIT (EIT’s annual innovation forum). In doing so, the ECO will actively involve EIT Community members and experts nominated by the KICs, ensuring that those with specific thematic expertise contribute substantively to the events through presentations, speeches, and other relevant engagements.
5. Maintain awareness and respect other dissemination and scouting, thematic-specific events organised by EIT Community members, in order to avoid overlaps in dates and content with other ECO-led initiatives, thereby enhancing the overall coherence of the EIT Community’s event calendar.
6. Coordinate and support the participation of EIT Community representatives in relevant national events, ensuring that their contributions are aligned with the strategic themes and objectives of the EIT Community.
7. Ensuring open communication and fair distribution of information within the country innovation ecosystem and taking all necessary measures to reach all relevant and potentially interested stakeholders. Reporting to the SRI Cluster or respective EIT KIC feedback allowing to improve communication.
   * 1. *Financial Sustainability support role*

In their critical role of supporting EIT KICs and RIS Hubs financial sustainability, The ECO is tasked with maintaining good relations with key country innovation ecosystem stakeholders, collecting relevant information on local opportunities to offer services generating additional revenue streams for EIT KICs and members of EIT Community Hub, promoting their involvement and active participation in adequate private or publicly funded activities and timely exchange of information among various stakeholders allowing EIT Community to use international and local funding opportunities. Specifically, the ECO undertake the following key tasks:

1. Scout for and recommend to the EIT KICs opportunities to implement joint projects financed through other EU / national / regional funds (including ESIF and IPA III).
2. Designing appropriate methods and tools for information sharing of financial sustainability opportunities for EIT KICs and RIS Hubs.
3. Conducting effective networking and matchmaking activities and continuous exchange of information on capacity and expertise of EIT Hub Community Members, EIT RIS Hubs, and other EIT KIC Offices, which may be offered to the stakeholders in the local ecosystem.
4. Coordinating the collection and dissemination of funding opportunities and key events from national, regional and third-party sources, other than those from the KICs. This task involves bringing these opportunities and events to the attention of local Hub Community Members, EIT RIS Hubs, and other EIT KIC Offices, ensuring a broad and inclusive reach.
   * 1. *ECOs’ Role in Conflict Management*

The ECO shall facilitate the resolution of functional conflicts within the EIT CRH, acting as intermediaries to encourage dialogue and understanding among conflicting parties.

In cases where The ECO is directly involved or unable to resolve the conflict, they shall be responsible for escalating the issue to the Lead KIC Officer, in line with the procedures outlined in Section V below.

Moreover, the ECO shall assist in gathering relevant information and providing context to the Lead KIC Officer or the EIT Community SRI Cluster, ensuring an informed decision-making process consistently adhering to the principles outlined in the Code of Conduct (Section V below), particularly in situations of conflict, to uphold the integrity and collaborative spirit of the EIT Community.

The ECO shall be responsible for ensuring that the outcomes of conflict resolution processes are communicated to relevant parties and that any learning or feedback from these processes is incorporated into future practice.

* 1. **RIS Hubs**

RIS Hubs act as focal points for the KIC’s activities in a Member State or associated country targeted by the RIS and are established by an individual KIC for the mobilization of local knowledge triangle actors.

As pivotal elements within the EIT Community, operating at the local level, RIS Hubs undertake the following functions:

1. Enhancing the innovation capacities of their local ecosystems. This involves organizing capacity-building activities, facilitating closer interactions among local knowledge triangle innovation actors, and disseminating the EIT Community’s results and good practices. They are expected to demonstrate measurable results and adjust their activities based on feedback from local ecosystem stakeholders.
2. Actively supporting the EIT RIS objective of attracting and integrating potential new partners and participants (e.g.: start-ups) into the EIT KICs and their activities. This includes promoting EIT Community opportunities within the local innovation ecosystems and acting as a pipeline for talent and innovation potential towards the EIT Community. RIS Hubs must work closely with local authorities and stakeholders, including EIT National Contact Points and the ECO, providing them with relevant information and support.
3. With the EIT's support, RIS Hubs lead efforts to establish synergies between EIT Community activities and the local innovation ecosystem, aligned with relevant RIS3 strategies. They engage with local authorities, conduct mapping exercises to identify funding and collaboration opportunities, and actively seek co-funding for their activities.
4. Coordinate their work with other EIT entities, such as other RIS Hubs, Co-Location Centres, and Satellite Offices, and the ECO. This includes regular updates on activities, cooperation in joint initiatives, and contributing to maximized impact. RIS Hubs dedicate a portion of their time to this coordination and assist in addressing queries related to and beyond their specific KIC, including directing stakeholders to appropriate contacts within the EIT Community.

Through these functions, beyond just acting as local hubs, RIS Hubs effectively leverage their unique expertise and extensive networks to make significant contributions to the EIT Community’s overarching goals. This includes actively participating in and driving forward research, development, and innovation initiatives.

Their deep understanding of the local innovation landscape enables them to identify and utilize regional strengths in a manner that complements the broader objectives of the EIT.

Some RIS HUBs functions may be transferred to the EIT CRH by the relevant KIC. In such cases, the EIT CRH will assume part of the responsibilities previously held by the RIS Hub. This transfer process includes the integration of existing activities, stakeholders, and strategic objectives into the broader framework of the Community RIS Hub. Simultaneously, the entities that were operating as RIS Hubs will evolve into Thematic Country Experts within the EIT Community RIS Hub. In their new capacity, these Thematic Country Experts will continue to play a significant role by continuing some of the functions they were performing and that have not been transitioned to the EIT CRH. This strategic repositioning is aimed at leveraging their local expertise and networks while aligning with the broader objectives of the EIT Community RIS Hub. The entire transition process will be carefully managed to ensure continuity and alignment with ongoing projects and initiatives, and a cohesive integration of roles within the EIT Community. This transition process will also be managed in accordance with the relevant contractual relationships.

* 1. **Co-location Centres (CLCs)**

Also referred to as 'Innovation Hubs', they are established by each KIC to carry out various activities. They serve as focal points for local and regional innovation and entrepreneurship activities within the EIT framework.

CLCs serve as dynamic engines of innovation within the EIT Community, playing a multifaceted role in regional innovation ecosystems. As key focal points, CLCs are dedicated to advancing the EIT KIC’s objectives and programs at the local level, actively promoting innovation and entrepreneurship. This involves not only disseminating information about EIT and EIT KIC initiatives but also inspiring local communities to participate in and contribute to these innovative endeavours.

In their host countries, CLCs undertake similar functions as those of the RIS Hubs, playing a pivotal role within the EIT Community Hub. They focus on local integration and adaptation of EIT Community strategies, ensuring that the unique regional innovation needs and opportunities are effectively addressed. This includes fostering a local innovation ecosystem, facilitating collaborations, and tailoring EIT KIC initiatives to regional specifics.

In countries without a dedicated CLC, the responsibilities extend to supporting the EIT Community RIS Hub through the corresponding CLC that covers their country of location. This support is manifested in ensuring that through its members, including RIS Hubs and KIC officers, relevant information, guidance, and resources are provided. CLCs in these circumstances serve a dual role: they not only manage their local activities but also act as liaisons and facilitators, ensuring that the broader EIT innovation network is cohesive and well-coordinated. This involves regular consultation, information sharing, and collaborative efforts with other CLCs to ensure a unified and effective approach to innovation across the EIT Community.

While The ECO is more focused on national-level coordination between Members of the CRH, strategic support, and conflict resolution among these Members, CLCs are centred on wider regional innovation promotion, community engagement, and the practical implementation of EIT KIC initiatives. The ECO operate more at a supporting level, whereas CLCs are deeply involved in the operational and local aspects of innovation activities.

Whenever there is a CLC working actively, its mission should be prioritised over the ECO role. For example, scouting start-ups, engaging new partners, developing a cooperation MoU with local authorities or similar.

* 1. **Thematic Country Experts**

Thematic country experts are individuals or entities, including former RIS Hubs, that hold an active contractual relationship with specific KICs to execute specific tasks. These tasks are typically focused on raising awareness of KICs funding opportunities, scouting for new partners or start-ups, and other related activities. In countries where no RIS Hub or CLC or Thematic Country Expert has been established by any EIT KIC, a KIC staff member might be appointed as Thematic Country Expert to be involved in EIT Community Hub activities.

Possessing thematic expertise aligned with their respective KIC’s focus areas, these experts are instrumental in achieving business objectives and country strategies. They play a crucial role in the dissemination of the thematic knowledge and the cultivation of strategic relationships at the country level.

In case of overlap in duties, the contractual mission of Thematic Country Experts shall be given precedence over the responsibilities of ECOs. This prioritization is especially relevant in activities such as scouting start-ups, engaging new partners, and developing a cooperation MoU with local authorities or similar.

The responsibilities of Thematic Country Experts include:

1. Contributing to the process of data consolidation and reporting. They collect, synthesize, and communicate relevant data and insights to the ECO and the EIT. This role is critical for informed decision-making within the EIT framework and ensures a comprehensive understanding of local activities, progress, and outcomes. Their diligent efforts in compiling and reporting this data are essential for maintaining a seamless flow of information and enhancing the overall effectiveness and coherence of the EIT’s initiatives.
2. Collaborating with the ECO in supporting EIT Community events organised by the latter. While not involved in the organizational logistics, Thematic Country Experts actively participate as speakers, contributors, and advisors, adding significant value to these events through their expertise and insights.
   1. **Members activities outside of their EIT CRH roles**

Beyond their EIT CRH roles, members remain independent actors, which may perform other activities, including also those contracted or mandated independently by EIT or EIT KICs. Their role as ECOs, RIS HUBs or Thematic Country Experts do not prevent them from taking part in EIT or EIT KIC’s projects, submitting proposals to calls or being a beneficiary of direct award or procurement competitive procedures, under the condition that these other activities do not entail any conflict of interest with the roles and responsibilities within the EIT Community RIS Hub, as defined and regulated in Section V below.

The processes of selecting members or their home institutions for implementing tasks beyond their role within the EIT CRH are conducted in an open, transparent and fair and just manner. Especially in instances where The ECO might compete with other EIT Community Hub members in EIT or KICs calls or procurement procedures, KICs will ensure that detailed information is shared with The ECO not earlier than at the time as it is available in other open communication channels. In the same vein,The ECO or other EIT CRH members cannot be appointed as proposals evaluators in KICs calls where they are participants, to prevent conflicts of interests and ensure impartiality in the evaluation process.

1. **CODE OF CONDUCT AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

EIT CRH are coordination mechanisms within the EIT Community in which different members are involved and whose tasks may sometimes overlap and/or create potential conflicts, which can be functional conflicts or conflicts of interest.

This is particularly relevant to the ECO’s position, since the ECO’s role is oriented to obtain new business opportunities for KICs (scouting funding opportunities as well as potential new partners, among others), while at the same time the ECO is allowed to carry out their own and independent activities, including participating in EIT and KICs’ open calls and requests for proposals. Furthermore, in the performance of their duties, the ECO have access to privileged information whose fair and correct use must be guaranteed.

Notwithstanding the particular position of ECOs, other members of the EIT CRH may also encounter situations in which interests might conflict.

Therefore, all members of the EIT Community RIS Hub agree on the importance of applying the highest ethical standards in the development of their activities and acknowledge their obligations towards the good governance regulations set forth in this section, to which they commit unconditionally.

These Principles and standards of conduct provisions form an integral part of maintaining the ethical and professional standards of the EIT Community RIS Hubs and align with the principles outlined in the EIT RIS Hubs Minimum Standards and Guiding Principles. It ensures that all members, particularly those in key roles such as ECOs, conduct their duties with utmost integrity and in alignment with the overarching objectives of the EIT Community, free from conflicting personal or professional interests.

* 1. **Principles and standards of conduct**

All members of the EIT CRH, with particular emphasis on ECOs, are bound by the specific principles, standards and conflict of interest provisions outlined in this section.

*General Principles and Standards*

1. *Integrity and Professionalism:* Members are committed to the highest levels of integrity and professionalism. They consistently avoid any actions that could harm the other members and/or the reputation or credibility of the EIT Community.
2. *Respect and Fair Treatment:* Members are dedicated to treating each other with *respect* and fairness, fostering a collaborative and inclusive environment*, ensuring that all voices within the EIT Community RIS Hubs are heard and considered in decision-making processes*
3. *Transparency and Accountability:* Members uphold transparency in all activities and decisions. They are accountable for their actions, ensuring openness in their conduct.
4. *Compliance with Laws and Policies:* Members strictly adhere to all relevant laws, regulations, and internal policies, recognizing this compliance as a fundamental aspect of their involvement with the EIT Community RIS Hubs.
5. *Confidentiality*: Upholding confidentiality and privacy obligations is a key responsibility of all members. They ensure the protection of sensitive information related to the EIT Community RIS Hubs and its activities.
6. *Conflict of Interest:* Members proactively avoid conflicts of interest. They are required to declare any potential or actual conflicts to the Lead KIC Officer as detailed in this Section and to adhere to the Conflict of Interest provisions outlined below.
7. *Alignment with EIT’s mission:* any parallel activities undertaken by The ECO or any other member of the EIT CRH must be in line with EIT and KICs’ mission and EIT Community overall objectives. Parallel activities must not contradict, be incoherent or incompatible with EIT and KICs’ mission and objectives.

*Functional conflicts*

Functional conflicts are conflicts that stem from the execution of the members’ tasks, such as role overlaps, responsibilities clashes, or real or apparent infringements of obligations.

Below is a non-exhaustive list of functional conflicts, which is displayed merely for exemplary purposes:

* The ECO and other EIT CRH members scout the same start-ups;
* The ECO and a RIS HUB are in conversations with several stakeholders to organize an event on the same or similar subject, without properly informing and aligning with each other;
* The ECO and a Thematic Country Expert are in contact with the same new potential partner in order to introduce it to different KICs.

*Conflicts of Interest specific provisions*

All members of the EIT Community RIS Hubs, including ECOs, RIS Hubs, CLCs, and Thematic Country Experts, shall make every reasonable effort to avoid any actual or apparent conflict of interest.

A “Conflict of Interest” refers to any situation when the member’s ability to act objectively in the performance of its tasks, in the benefit or to protect the EIT Community RIS HUB's interests, or perform their duties within the EIT framework, is compromised by a personal, financial, or business interest. An apparent conflict can exist even in the absence of an actual conflict of interest. An apparent conflict exists when a reasonable observer could infer from the circumstances that the member’s ability to act in the benefit of or protect the EIT Community RIS HUB's interest, or perform their duties within the EIT framework, is compromised by personal, financial, or business interests.

It is the responsibility of each member to actively prevent and address such situations to maintain the integrity and trustworthiness of the EIT Community.

Members of the EIT CRH, with a special focus on ECOs, are prohibited from hiring or favoring either themselves or related parties[[3]](#footnote-4) in their functions. Members must ensure that all decisions and actions in their professional capacity are made objectively, free from personal bias, and in the best interest of the EIT Community RIS Hubs. In this vein members must avoid any conflict of interest or prejudice to EIT CRH in carrying out parallel activities. While members of the EIT CRH may carry out other activities in addition to their positions in the EIT CRH, they must not enter into any conflict of interest nor disregard or anyhow prejudice their tasks as members of the EIT CRH.

The following situations shall be deemed as actual or potential conflict of interests (non‐exhaustive list):

* An ECO does not share information about a KIC’s call to potential partners in a timely manner, so that s/he can have more possibilities to have her/himself be awarded that call.
* An ECO does not share with the relevant EIT CRH members information that would be of interest regarding funding opportunities, so that s/he can apply for those funds in her/his professional activity other than the ECO position.
* An ECO is hiring closely related parties as speakers in the organization of a EIT CRH event.
* An ECO is favoring a related party in the elaboration of a MOU with stakeholders.
* A Thematic Country Expert gives misleading information to a non-EIT CRH member who has requested information about a call published by a KIC to which such Thematic Country Expert is also submitting a proposal.

The above list is a non-exhaustive list, displayed as a guidance of the type of behavior that could constitute a conflict of interest.

* 1. **Application of the relevant KIC’s Compliance policies**

In addition to the principles and standards of conduct outlined above, which are fundamental provisions for ensuring good governance within the EIT Community, members of the EIT CRH are bound by the compliance regulations of the KIC with whom they have a contract in force. Hence these relevant KIC’s compliance regulation shall apply in addition and complementary to these principles and standards of conduct.

* 1. **Conflict resolution**

Addressing conflicts in a clear and comprehensible manner not only fosters a harmonious working environment but also reinforces the community’s dedication to upholding the highest ethical standards.

The following subsections detail the mechanisms and principles guiding the resolution of conflicts, ensuring that all interactions and decisions within the EIT Community RIS Hubs are conducted with fairness and respect for all members.

*Resolution of Functional Conflicts*

EIT CRH members are encouraged to resolve functional conflicts through direct dialogue among the involved parties. In case of overlap in duties, the contractual mission of EIT CRH members shall be given precedence over the responsibilities of the ECO, as described in Section IV (Roles and Responsibilities).

If a functional conflict remains unresolved, it should be escalated to the Lead KIC Officer. The Lead KIC Officer will review the situation and facilitate further discussion for resolution. Persisting conflicts will be further escalated to the EIT Community SRI Cluster, which will make a final decision in accordance with established decision-making processes.

*Resolution of Conflicts of Interest*

All EIT CRH members, with particular emphasis on ECOs, must proactively declare any potential or actual conflicts of interest in writing to the Lead KIC Officer. This includes conflicts involving themselves but also any such situations they may observe in the network.

Upon receipt of a conflict of interest declaration, the Lead KIC Officer will assess the conflict's level and implications. If necessary, the Lead KIC Officer will forward the case to the relevant KIC Compliance Officer, who will pursue an investigation in accordance with such relevant KIC ‘s compliance regulations and procedures. Mitigation measures might include altering the member's responsibilities, reassigning tasks, or, in severe cases, suspending or terminating their involvement in specific activities. In particular, in cases involving ECO’s infringement of any conflict of interest policy within calls or request for proposals framework, the ECO may, among other measures, be requested to withdraw from the proposal/action.

All reported conflicts and the actions taken to address them will be documented thoroughly by relevant KIC Compliance Officer. This documentation will be maintained in accordance with the relevant KIC’s processes.

In any case, all conflicts of interest situations will be escalated to the cluster by the Lead KIC Officer.

**5.4 Monitoring and Feedback**

The code of conduct and the conflict resolution provisions will be regularly reviewed and evaluated by the SRI Cluster to ensure their effectiveness and alignment with the EIT Community’s values.

A mechanism for members to provide feedback on the conflict resolution process will be established by the lead KIC. This feedback will be used to continually improve and adapt the conflict resolution procedures within the EIT Community RIS Hubs.

1. **COORDINATION** 
   1. **Regular Meetings**

A regular schedule for meetings shall be established at EIT Community RIS Hub level to ensure consistent communication and coordination. These meetings should be held at least quarterly.

Procedures for setting meeting dates and venues, agendas, ensuring that they address key operational issues, strategic alignment, and opportunities for collaboration shall be developed by the ECO.

In between meetings, under the coordination of the ECO, make use and maintain digital platforms for effective communication and coordination among EIT Community RIS Hubs members. This shall include the EIT RIS portal, and may be complemented by shared online workspaces, databases, and communication tools.

A system for regular feedback from members shall be implemented by the ECO to continually improve coordination and collaboration efforts.

**6.2 Stakeholder Engagement**

The members of the EIT CRH will outline procedures for interaction with external stakeholders, including industry partners, government bodies, and academia, to enhance the impact and reach of the EIT Community RIS Hub.

1. **DATA MANAGEMENT**
   1. **Individual Data Management Protocols**

Each member of the EIT Community RIS Hub is responsible for establishing their own protocols for the collection of data related to their activities. These protocols should focus on ensuring the accuracy and relevance of the data collected.

Members are encouraged to implement secure storage solutions for their collected data, ensuring confidentiality and adherence to data protection laws, including the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

**7.2 Data Sharing and Accessibility**

Members will define their own guidelines for internal data management, including provisions for who within their organization can access the data. These guidelines should ensure maintaining privacy and security while allowing access to necessary data for fulfilling roles and responsibilities.

For external data sharing, including reporting requests from the ECO, the EIT, the EIT KICs, and other stakeholders, EIT CRH members are required to establish a protocol for regular reporting, with clear conditions that align with the objectives of the EIT Community, while comply with legal requirements. This includes determining what data can be shared and under what circumstances.

* 1. **Data Utilization**

Members are encouraged to use their collected data for informed decision-making, program improvement, and strategic planning specific to their areas within the EIT Community RIS Hub.

Regular analysis of the collected data should be conducted by each member to assess the impact and effectiveness of their activities. They should produce and share reports with relevant stakeholders within the EIT Community, ensuring transparency and collective progress monitoring.

* 1. **Data Protection and Privacy**

Each member is responsible for ensuring that their data management practices comply with applicable privacy laws and regulations.

Members should provide training and resources on data protection and privacy best practices within their own organizations. This may include GDPR compliance training, data security protocols, and awareness programs to ensure all personnel handle data responsibly.

1. **AMENDMENT AND TERMINATION**
   1. **Amendment of the MOU**

Any party wishing to propose amendments to the MOU must submit a formal request to the Steering Committee (Cluster). The request should detail the proposed changes and the rationale behind them.

Amendments will be considered and voted on during the bi-annual Steering Committee meetings. An amendment will be adopted if it receives a majority vote from the committee members.

* 1. **Termination of the MOU**

The MOU will be applicable to each member as long as the EIT CRH is in place and the member has an agreement in force with a KIC appointing it as ECO, RIS HUB or Thematic Country Expert.

Upon termination of such an agreement, the departing party must fulfil any outstanding obligations foreseen in this MOU and collaborate on ensuring a smooth transition of their responsibilities to prevent disruption to the EIT Community RIS Hub’s activities.

* 1. **Breach of the MOU**

In the event that a party is found to be in breach of the terms and conditions of this MOU, such as failing to adhere to the outlined roles, responsibilities, or code of conduct (Section V), the breach will be formally identified and documented by the lead KIC officer.

The party in breach will be notified in writing and given a reasonable opportunity to rectify the breach, with specific guidelines and timelines for corrective action.

If the breach is not rectified within the specified timeframe, or in cases of repeated or severe breaches, the Steering Committee may decide further actions. These actions can include, but are not limited to, a formal warning, temporary or definitive suspension of certain rights or privileges within the EIT Community RIS Hub.

The Parties acknowledge that the breach of the MOU provisions may also constitute a breach of their respective contracts with the relevant KICs; which in such cases shall be terminated according to their provisions.

Termination of the agreement with the KIC will lead to the cessation of the party’s involvement in the EIT Community RIS Hub. The party will be required to fulfil any outstanding obligations and assist in the transfer of responsibilities to ensure minimal disruption to the community’s activities.

1. **SIGNATORY AUTHORITY**

Authorized representatives from each EIT Community RIS Hub member entity, including the ECO, CLCs, RIS Hubs, and Thematic Country Experts, which shall sign this MOU to formalize their commitment and participation.

Each representative shall sign this MOU by providing their signature alongside their printed name, title, and the date of signing.

Each member entity will undertake internal ratification procedures as required by their organizational policies to validate their participation in the MOU.

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1. <https://eit.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ris_hubs_minimum_standards_and_guiding_principles_final_agreement.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. In countries where KICs have not appointed any RIS Hub or Thematic Country Expert, they may appoint a KIC’s or a CLC’s officer to fulfil and take up the duties of the RIS Hub and/or Thematic Country Expert position. In these cases, they are selected or appointed by the KIC and communicated to the Lead KIC to confirm their status by the Steering Committee to be able to become a member and participate in EIT Community RIS Hub activities. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. 'Related parties' include individuals or entities that have a close personal, familial, or financial relationship with the ECO. This encompasses family members, personal business partners, or entities where the ECO or their close associates have a significant interest. The ECO must avoid any situations where their personal relationships could influence, or appear to influence, their decision-making or actions as an ECO. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)