

D2.6 Strategic Plan for the co-design and establishment of the European Innovation Hubs (1st Report)

9th December 2021

Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary	3
2. Overarching Mission and Vision for the Establishment of European Innovation Hubs	6
2.1 Mission Statement	6
2.2 Vision Statement	6
2.3 EIH Identity	6
3. European Innovation Hubs within the RUN-EU project	10
4. EIH Strategy Map	12
4.1. EIH Objectives, KPI's and initiatives	16
5. Embedding EIH Overarching Tasks and Deliverables	19
6. Strategic plan implementation and next steps	20
7. Annex	22

Table of Figures

Figure 1 – A Proposed EIH Governance Structure	9
Figure 2 – The work plan for RUN-EU alliance	10
Figure 3 – European Innovation Hubs Operating Principles	11
Figure 4 – Overarching Strategy Map for the EIHs illustrating KPIs and objectives to be addressed	13
Figure 5 – Example of Research Cluster, Hub, External Partner Audit output for EIH 3: Social Innovation	14
Figure 6 – Example of Research Cluster, Hub, External Partner Interconnectivity for EIH 1: Future Industries and Sustainable Regional Development	15
Figure 7 – Example of Research Cluster, Hub, External Partner Audit output for EIH 1: Future and Sustainable Industries	23
Figure 8 – Example of Research Cluster, Hub, External Partner Audit output for EIH 2: Bioeconomy	24

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Regional University Network – European University (RUN-EU) will strive to secure the sustainable economic, social, cultural and environmental progress of its regions and stakeholders. RUN-EU will implement this mission by delivering on the future and advanced skills necessary for its students and regional stakeholders to successfully meet the challenges of the future, engage in societal transformation and promote active citizenship, thereby leading in the creation of a new type of multinational interregional alliance, a European Zone for Interregional Development (EZ-ID).

Through the development of European Innovation Hubs (EIHs) across the RUN-EU partner network, one of the key goals of the RUN-EU mission will be achieved. This goal is the creation of collaborative, regionally oriented and novel mobility led education, research and innovation. RUN-EU sees EIHs as unique educational platforms where joint interregional research, innovation and regional stakeholder engagement activities will be created and nurtured. EIHs will seek collaborations with associated partners in government, business, society and uniquely with the OECD Secretariat of Higher Education and its Labour Market Relevance and Outcomes (LMRO) initiative. It is envisaged that the outcomes of this collaborative approach will not only feed back into education, research and innovation development opportunities within the regions of the alliance through RUN-EU training models such as Short Advanced Programmes (SAPs), Future Advanced Skills Academies (FASAs), but could also inform innovative solutions for labour market relevance and outcomes which would be adaptable to different regions of Europe.

The principal aim of establishing European Innovation Hubs is to promote collaborative teaching and research excellence through the development of student-centred cutting edge pedagogical, research, innovation and engagement activities, using the strong links between the alliance members and their local ecosystems and businesses. It is envisaged this collaborative method will nurture and stimulate the student body of RUN-EU, but also other regional stakeholders to adopt a sustainable approach to the economic, social, cultural and environmental progress of the member regions. It is envisaged the creation of innovative mobility opportunities through new multinational academies and hubs will improve the national and international competitiveness of the associated regions and their academic community thus allowing them to: (i) complement existing capital and large city regions; (ii) retain and attract young talent and (iii) correct existing unfavourable bias in development trends in peripheral European regions.

RUN-EU partners have committed to the establishment of European Innovation Hubs focusing on the three overarching thematic areas of: 1) Future and Sustainable Industries, 2) Bioeconomy, and 3) Social Innovation.

The working group on the establishment of EIHs has carried out an initial audit on current Research Clusters, Associated External Partners, Associated Hubs and Facilities that exist across the network as part of delivering Task 2.1 which informs this Strategic Plan on each partners' readiness levels for joining an EIH in a particular thematic area. This audit will be reviewed on

an annual basis to catalogue the progress of each EIHS' development and individual RUN-EU partners interactions and growth as a result.

The audit has provided graphical insight into the partners clarifying main interests and providing a primary focus point for initial establishment of the EIHS under a shared Mission and Vision.

The graphic also directly connects the RUN-EU members with their own external partners, providing an extra layer in the audit, which will help the partners not only to reach their primary shared goals within the network, but also to act for our external partners as a turntable of knowledge. The external partners are facilitated to contact / connect with other external partners with the help of RUN-EU members, to reach goals initially out of reach of our RUN EU-network.

One of the interesting, if not thrilling, results of this process, is the emerging cooperation between our institutes based upon curiosity, shared values, complementary skills and experience. Knowing each other does not just have an effect in the described areas – it goes much deeper and will have a long-term impact beyond the formal end of the RUN-EU programme.

These structured interactions through RUN-EU always start with curiosity, of staff members looking for interactions to enhance programmes, or to start some new areas of research. They find their way to network partners through colleagues already involved in the programme. These structured yet more or less spontaneous interactions are already an important side effect of the RUN-EU programme which cannot be underestimated and will be thoroughly utilised to make RUN-EU a success.

This Strategic Plan aims to align RUN-EU to Regional, National and European Strategy for driving Innovation to (a) bring about societal change and economic sustainability, (b) address global challenges including meeting Sustainable Development Goals, and (c) prepare Europe for the challenges of the coming decade and beyond.

This Strategic Plan was prepared by the following members from the RUN-EU Partner Institutions:

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9th December 2021.

2. OVERARCHING MISSION AND VISION FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF EUROPEAN INNOVATION HUBS

2.1 Mission Statement

The mission of European Innovation Hubs (EIH) consists in fostering joint synergistic interregional research, innovation and regional stakeholder engagement activities, departing from existing members' regional innovation clusters and ensuring their expansion to an interlinked and collaborative network involving associated partners from each country, drawn from industry and enterprise, regional government entities and society. This holistic EIH framework will be deeply complementary as it will foster shared open access to knowledge, innovation and infrastructure exchange for stakeholders, end-users and beneficiaries associated with respective expertise from each region; thus, supporting, and enabling co-development of transnational EIH hubs. On the first phase of RUN-EU, the European Innovation Hubs to be created will be focused on three areas: Future Industry and Sustainable Regional Development, the Bio-economy and Social Innovation.

2.2 Vision Statement

The inter-university European Innovation Hubs to be created will constitute one of the central pillars of the envisaged European Zone of Interregional Development (EZ-ID), by using the strong links between the alliance members and their local ecosystems and businesses in the definition and provision of collaborative future-proofed skills-based educational opportunities, joint research and knowledge exchange, thus contributing to adopting a sustainable approach to the economic, social, cultural and environmental progress of the member regions.

2.3 EIH Identity

The strategy of each EIH follows the overarching strategy. To have a better understanding of what an EIH looks like, the following guidelines are fundamental:

Appearance

Each EIH is a virtual entity.

One of the most influential elements of WP2 will be the network element as well as of each of the hubs themselves. By describing the EIH as virtual, the essence of being a network is emphasized. To express and support this network within the three thematic areas as well as an overarching network, we will research the possibilities to develop and implement a digital environment. This digital environment will be an important and sustainable element of WP2.

Branding

The name of each hub itself will reflect the domain of the hub. The names can be seen as a kind of sub labels of the RUN EU label, and as such be part of the bigger RUN EU brand. Since RUN EU is aimed to be sustainable in itself, the key element 'sustainability' with the EIH's will be derived from the main brand.

The label 'EIH'

Whether an activity is to be described and branded as an EIH activity by RUN EU or not, needs formal confirmation by the EIH director. Each 'formal' EIH activity is a cooperation of at least two of the RUN EU partners. Each 'formal' activity is connected to at least one of the regional ecosystems per RUN EU HEI, preferably covering the quadruple helix. Commitment should be confirmed by at least one senior staff member per RUN EU HEI.

Governance

The EIH's have a common, joint governance structure (Figure 1). Whether each EIH will be a legal entity, is to be discussed once the structure has been finalised.

Attention will be given to the points of entry-procedures: where do we start activities, how do we proceed on this, etcetera.

The connection between WP2 and WP5 will be emphasized and clarified to ensure smooth understanding and cooperation.

Integration of overarching goals into secondary goals of other work packages such as WP3 – FASA, WP4 – SAP; WP 5 Research; WP6 – Mobility and MP7 –

/ Double Degrees will be identified as part of each EIHs establishment and aligned to the overall RUN-EU strategic goals.

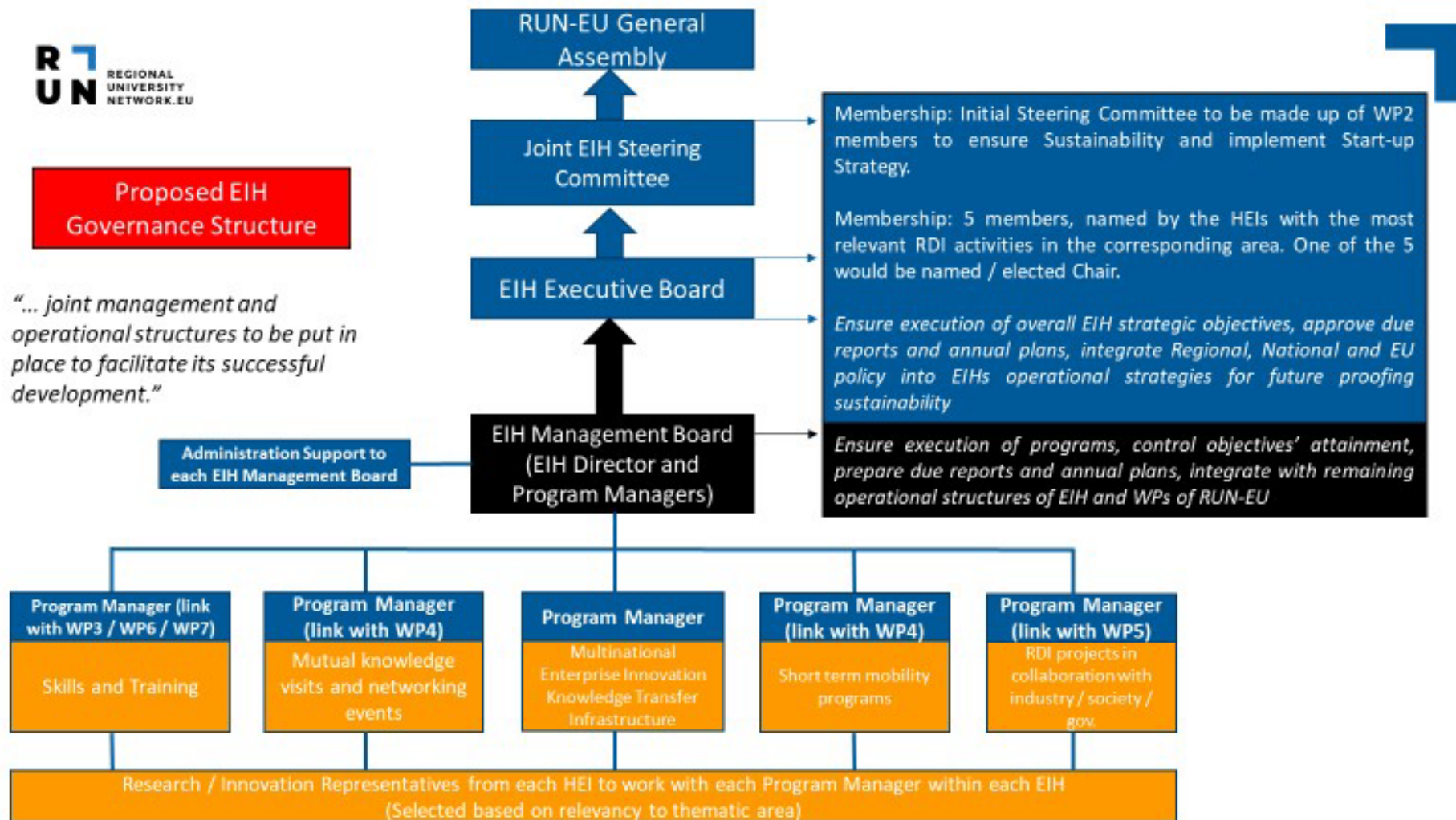


Figure 1 – A Proposed EIH Governance Structure

3. EUROPEAN INNOVATION HUBS WITHIN THE RUN-EU PROJECT.

European Innovation Hubs constitute the ultimate output envisaged by work package 2 (WP2), within the generic work plan of RUN-EU (Figure 2).

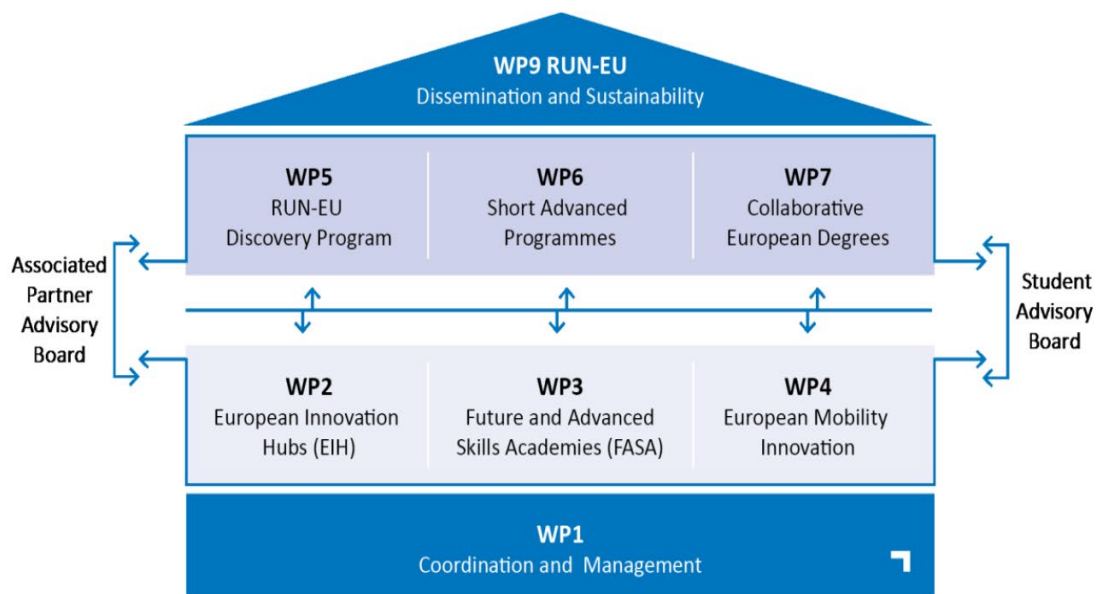


Figure 2 – The work plan for RUN-EU alliance

In WP2, inter-university European Innovation Hubs will be created, by using the strong links between the alliance members and their local ecosystems and businesses in the definition and provision of collaborative future-proofed skills-based educational opportunities, joint research and knowledge exchange; thus, contributing to adopting a sustainable approach to the economic, social, cultural and environmental progress of the member regions.

This alliance believes the existing members’ regional innovation clusters and the collaborative European Innovation Hubs to be developed from them, constitute one of the central pillars of sustainable regional development. It will therefore underpin the collaborative activities to be developed within this European University.

The principal output of these hubs will be the delivery of interregional Research, Development and Innovation (RD&I) activities designed to deliver on societal transformation requirements, within the framework of the relevant Smart Specialisation Strategies (RIS3) and the UN goals for sustainable development. The European Innovation Hubs will support and influence the members’ regions economic global competitiveness, environmental responsibility and inclusive

social policies, as well as guiding higher education strategies, future skills programmes, interregional activities and joint applications to European research and innovation calls by alliance members.

Figure 3 provides a diagrammatic description of the operating principles of the European Innovation Hubs.

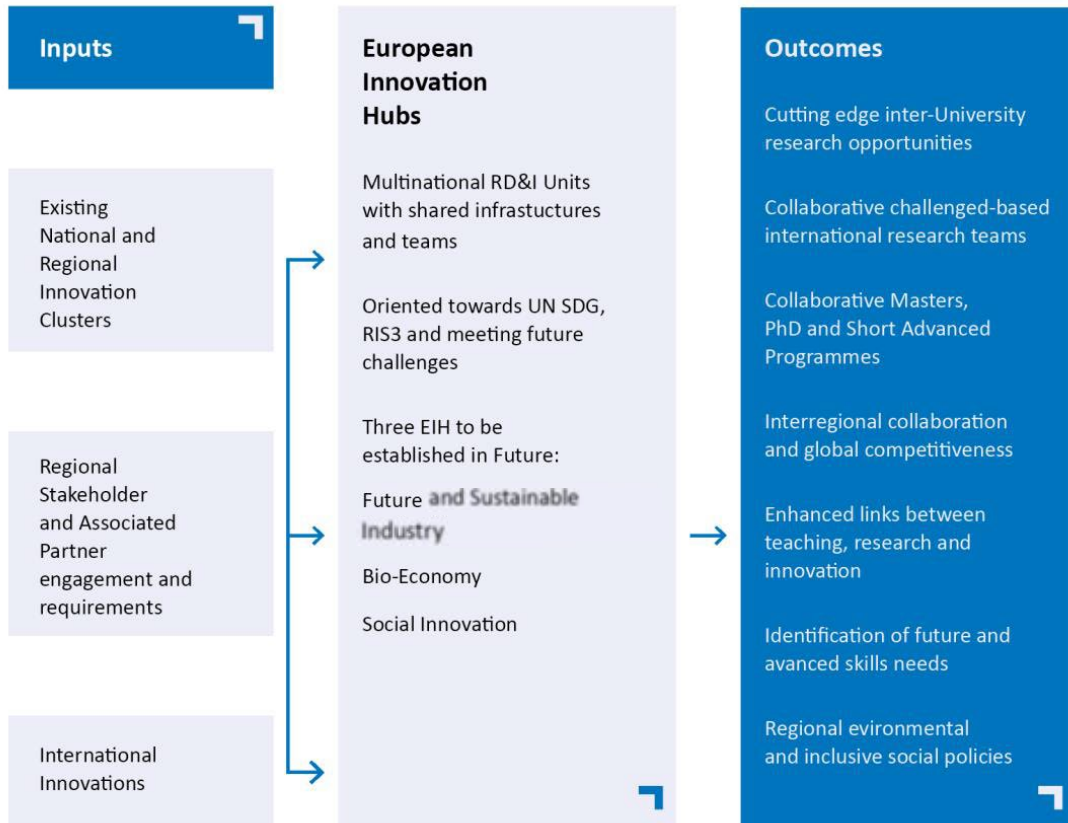


Figure 3 – European Innovation Hubs Operating Principles

4. EIH STRATEGY MAP

Each thematic EIH will identify its own Mission and Vision aligning to the overarching RUN-EU EIH Strategic Plan as described below:

Mission: The EIH in “XXXXXX” constitutes an interregional network dedicated to the development of collaborative research and innovation processes within the areas of XXXXXXXX, jointly with and prompted by the needs of businesses (fostering the growth of the very small and pushing for a sustainable evolution of the very large), public sector and civil society, utilising a quadruple helix approach.

Vision: EIH in “XXXXXX” will be recognized as an European reference in research with regional impact, in this thematic area, using a human-centered approach and the strong links between the alliance members and their local ecosystems and businesses in the definition and provision of collaborative future-proofed skills-based educational opportunities, joint research and knowledge exchange, thus contributing to adopting a sustainable approach to the economic, social, cultural and environmental progress of the member regions. It will constitute one of the central pillars of the European Zone of Interregional Development (EZ-ID) envisaged by RUN-EU.

As each thematic EIH will have a bespoke focus on business, industry and community, it is important that the strategy they utilise represents critical areas of support, skillset, economic impact and growth and future proofing for responsiveness to their stakeholders needs.

Through the identification of what the goals, processes and supports each thematic EIH has influence over, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) will be established with identified initiatives with milestones and deliverables set to ensure performance and development goals are met.

Figure 4 illustrates the strategy map layout to be used for each thematic EIH to accomplish this planning process. These initiatives will also include input and output points with the other work-packages of RUN-EU to inform in the development of key skills, training programmes and opportunities of innovative learning with associate partners and regional stakeholders.

It is at this point that each thematic EIH will identify key National and European Policies for the development of funding streams for the EIHs and to ensure EIHs serve as Regional and European change makers for society as a whole. One example of this would be the European Commissions Long Term vision for the EU;s rural areas, where they have created a rural action plan to help rural communities and businesses reach their full potential (https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/new-push-european-democracy/long-term-vision-rural-areas_en). This directly aligns with EIH in Social Innovation

where local community groups and businesses in rural areas can be supported in a sustainable ecosystem providing food, homes, jobs and essential services.

Similarly, Smart Manufacturing and Digitisation Policies across the EU partners also afford a sustainable funding stream for the Future and Sustainable Industries EIH, already, the EU are funding the development of European Digitisation Hubs with the purpose of interregional connectivity of the winning hub locations across the EU.

The EU Just Transition Strategy to shift from fossil to renewable energy production will bring €170M in 2022 to member states to support this transition and protect employment by supporting the development of jobs and enterprise linked to the Bio-economy.

All RUN-EU EIHs have direct and immediate opportunities and responsibilities to meet EU and therefore regional needs for change in order to meet the 17 Global Sustainable Development Goals.

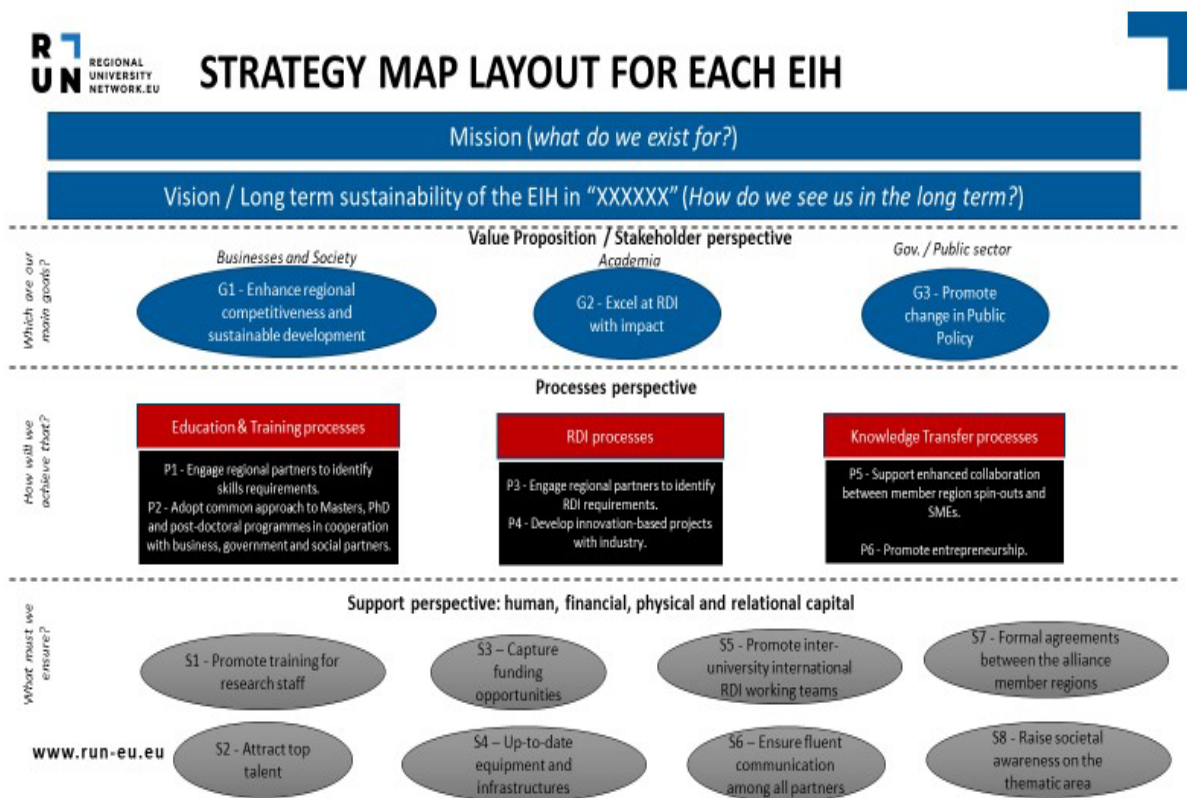


Figure 4 – Overarching Strategy Map for the EIHs illustrating KPIs and objectives to be addressed

The strategy map is also informed from Task 2.1 deliverable, the EIH audit report which assigned all active research clusters, hubs and associated partners from each RUN-EU member into at least one of the EIH thematic areas. Where a cluster had activity in more than one area, the cluster was represented by its activities themselves in each of the relevant EIHs. An example of

output from the Audit for EIH 3: Social Innovation, can be seen in figure 5 (see annex for Audit Output for EIH1 and 2).

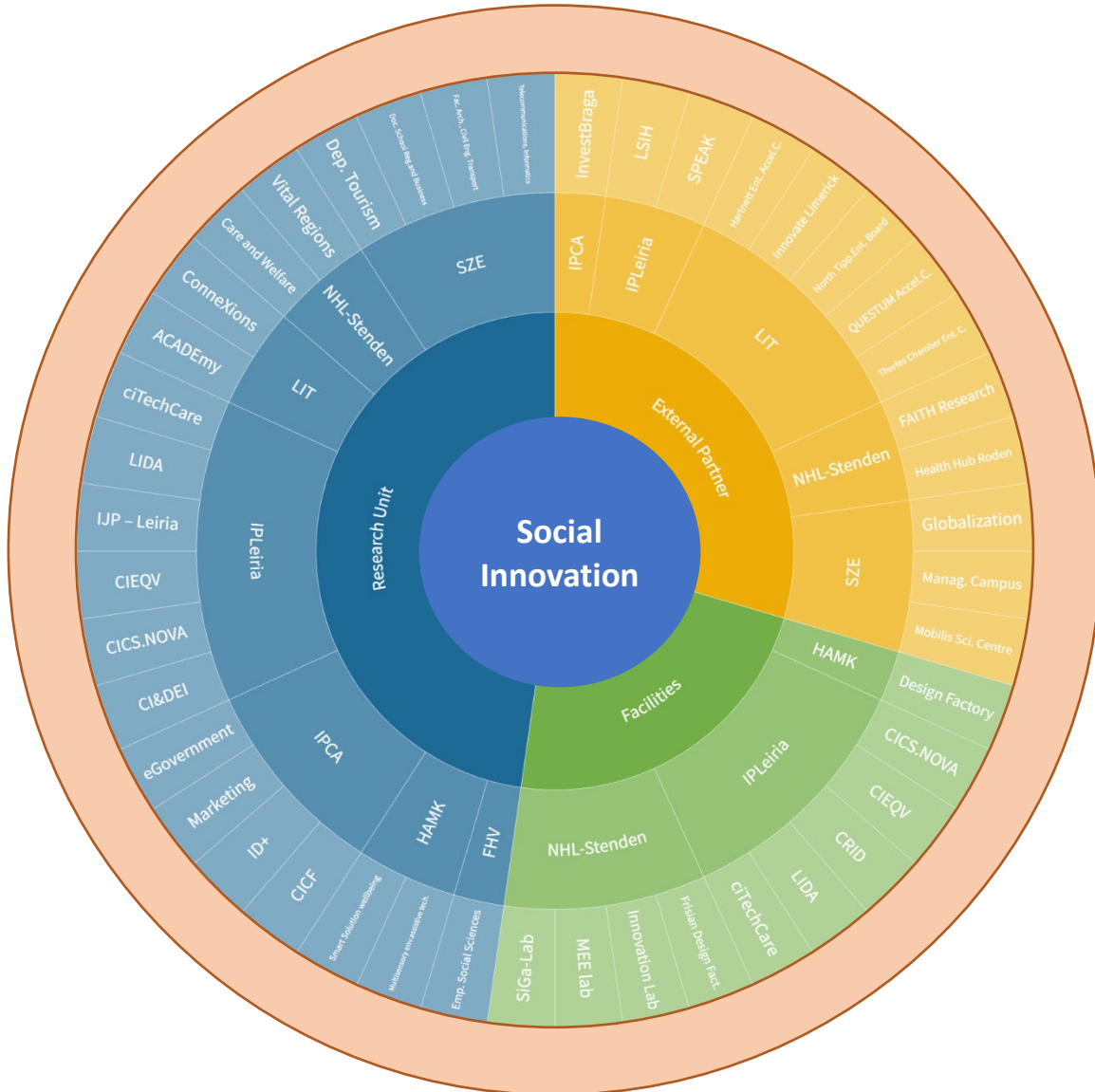


Figure 5 – Example of Research Cluster, Hub, External Partner Audit output for EIH 3: Social Innovation

Utilising this audit output, the thematic EIH leads will establish a virtual network for all hub communications and dissemination of current activities and calls for further funding. Inter EIH links will be identified to determine mutually beneficial overlap in activities in thematic areas. Figure 6 illustrates an example output of this cross connectivity within the RUN-EU partner clusters in EIH 1 – Future and Sustainable Industries. It is important to note that this thematic EIH was renamed after discussions with key stakeholders from the original title of Future Industries and Sustainable Regional Development as it was felt the new title better reflected the focus of the EIH. It was felt that all EIHS should have a Sustainable Development focus and

therefore it is proposed that ‘Sustainable’ would be added to the titles of EIH 2 and 3. This better reflects the overarching goals of each EIH to meeting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

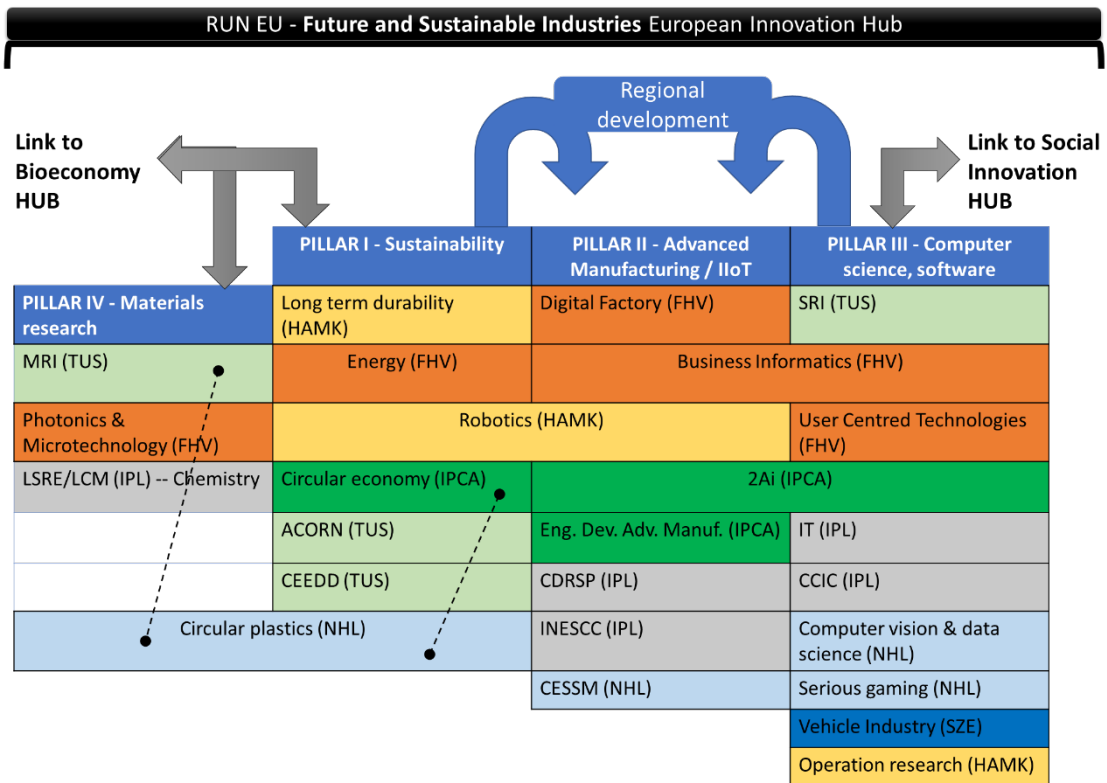


Figure 6 – Example of Research Cluster, Hub, External Partner Interconnectivity for EIH 1: Future Industries and Sustainable Regional Development.

4.1. EIH OBJECTIVES, KPI'S AND INITIATIVES

The following tables detail the Objectives, KPIs each thematic EIH needs to address and examples of Initiatives in which to accomplish them.

No.	Objective description	KPI	Initiative
P1	Engage regional partners to identify skills requirements.	No. partners engaged in the identification of skills requirements.	Establish, each year, a consistent program of exploratory visits and networking events with external partners (quadruple helix approach: industry representative bodies, SMEs, national and regional entrepreneurial and innovation agencies, regional government agencies, regional and national social innovation and cultural bodies and agencies)
P2	Adopt common approach to programmes in cooperation with business, government and social partners.	Joint programmes developed in cooperation with business, government and social partners	Articulate initiatives and programmes with WP3
P3	Engage regional partners to identify RDI requirements	No. partners engaged in the identification of RDI requirements.	Establish, each year, a consistent program of exploratory visits and networking events with external partners (quadruple helix approach: industry representative bodies, SMEs, national and regional entrepreneurial and innovation agencies, regional government agencies, regional and national social innovation and cultural bodies and agencies)
P4	Develop innovation-based projects with industry / government / social partners	No. innovation-based projects with industry	Short term mobility program to bring together multidisciplinary and international teams working with industry / government / social partners (articulate with WP4)

No.	Objective description	KPI	Initiative
P5	Support enhanced collaboration between member region spin-outs and SMEs.	No. projects developed involving both spin-outs and SMEs	Establish a multinational Enterprise Innovation knowledge transfer infrastructure
P6	Promote entrepreneurship.	No. entrepreneurship projects supported / mentored through projects involving RUN-EU members' collaboration	Establish a multinational Enterprise Innovation knowledge transfer infrastructure
S1	Promote training for research staff	No. Short duration CPD directed for staff training, in the thematic area of the EIH	Articulate initiatives and programmes with WP6
S2	Attract top talent	No. new researchers hired	Articulate initiatives and programmes with WP5
S3	Capture funding opportunities	No. approved joint projects involving RUN-EU members	Articulate initiatives and programmes with WP5
S4	Have up-to-date equipment and infrastructures specific to the EIH area	No. identified locations of available resources and agreements in place to use them	From WP5 Audit report... share specialised equipment / infrastructures (physical or virtually)
S5	Promote inter-university international RDI working teams	No. thematic international teams working in common projects	Short term mobility program to bring together multidisciplinary and international teams working with industry / government / social partners (articulate with WP4)

No.	Objective description	KPI	Initiative
S6	Ensure fluent communication among all partners	No. workshop dissemination events	Articulate initiatives and programmes with WP8
S7	Formal agreements between the alliance member regions	No. formal agreements involving RUN-EU members and / or external partners of RUN-EU regions	Establish, each year, a consistent program of exploratory visits and networking events with external partners (quadruple helix approach: industry representative bodies, SMEs, national and regional entrepreneurial and innovation agencies, regional government agencies, regional and national social innovation and cultural bodies and agencies)
S8	Raise societal awareness on the thematic area	Survey inferring societal awareness on the thematic area (in two moments in time, separated by N years)	Structured Program for awareness raising engagement and demonstrative activities related to each thematic area, directed to diverse targets (e.g.: community groups, local gov. entities, SMEs, HEI students). Articulate with WP8.

Objectives, KPIs and Initiatives will be reviewed annually to ensure the EIH targets are addressing RUN-EU, Regional and European needs.

5. EMBEDDING EIH OVERARCHING TASKS AND DELIVERABLES

Each thematic EIH will be responsible for meeting the overarching tasks of work package 2 and developing the deliverable outputs including annual reports on EIH activity and production of dissemination material. To do this each thematic EIH will develop an individual strategic plan utilising this overarching strategic plan as a template.

The main tasks and deliverables which the thematic EIHs need to embed into their Individual Strategic Plans include:

Task 2.3 Identification of Interregional RDI Activities and embedded Training Programmes

- Identifying and creating inter-institutional RDI teams with relevant RDI activity goals and funding targets
- Development of a common training programmes
- Production of an annual activities report (D2.3)

Task 2.4 Sustainable, Regional and Interregional Innovation and Development

- Build an Interregional Sustainable Innovation and Development Network with All Associated Partners to stimulate and drive the creation of a future European Zone for Interregional Development
- Integrate co-operation and collaboration opportunities into the annual activities report (D2.3)

Task 2.5 Interregional Education & Training Opportunities and Future Skills Needs (liaising with WP3-7)

- Establishment of a working group to identify Future Skills needs and disseminate to other RUN-EU groups for sustainable regional skills development including structured mobility CPD for research students and staff (D2.4). Integration of activities into the annual activities report (D2.3)

6. STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLEMENTATION AND NEXT STEPS

EIH Start-up Strategy

In order to successfully meet the deliverables for work package 2, each thematic EIH will need to develop an EIH start-up strategy by using a Business Model Development Approach.

By developing a Business Model for each EIH we will be able to identify:

- **Customers:** Students to researchers and staff to start-ups, SME's, industry and associations etc;
- **Relationships:** Develop what the engagement looks like – membership or partnership or collaboration etc – what will the model look like? Mixed model. Should include all stakeholders from student to academic staff to start up, SME;
- **Activities:** Visibility of the community is important – this can help with showing the community the expertise and experience of its members which can then lead to new projects / initiatives. Networking is important part of the structure; Engagement with SMEs/industry– sponsored research (helping to increase R&D capacity); PR – success stories, events – bring people together;
- **Channels:** Opportunities for an 'open innovation' platform -> students/researchers share with companies + companies share with academic community;
- **Resources:** In addition to a team to run the EIH, establish and utilise the EIH steering committee to leverage and help attract companies to the EIH and validate/ advise on the strategy and engagement with industry:
 - Consider that the steering committee would work across the different countries and not just a local perspective – start local though and nudge growth through strategic engagement;
- **Partners:** RUN-EU stakeholder organisations
- **Value proposition:** To be developed / articulated based on mission / vision after initial engagement with key stakeholders (includes impacts for all stakeholders)

To start - Engage with key Research and Business stakeholders with an infrastructure and resource schema to discuss with priority projects and potential quick wins.

Strategic Implementation Plan

Each thematic EIH should:

- Establish an Infrastructural development team to operationalise and implement the EIH strategic plan. This would include identification of human capital support funding requirements such as funding for three Innovation Managers / Assistants whose roles would include partner connectivity, funding identification and dissemination of marketing materials and outputs;
- Host networking events with researchers, innovators, business, industry and community partners from each RUN-EU member and identify first step Pillars of activity;
- Dissemination of EIH activities with official Launch Ceremonies at RUN-EU events e.g. Freezing Week in HAMK, Finland in February 2022 or the General Management Meeting in NHLStenden-Leeuwarden, The Netherlands in March 2022;
- Develop a branding and awareness campaign of the EIH among RUN-EU Members in collaboration with WP8 team.

Also, as part of strategic plan implementation, the work-package team will focus on the following key topics from a regional perspective. This is essential to determine which EIH will have greatest impact on what regional area and clusters.

- Social regional context of each RUN-EU region and public policy / strategic documents relevant to key Thematic Areas
- Availability of Human Capital in Core Tech Transfer and Innovation areas
- Track Record of Lead Principal Investigators
- SWOT analysis
- Risk mitigation recommended actions

7. ANNEX

Deliverable D2.1, EIH Research Cluster, Hub and External Stakeholder audit is available upon request and through the RUN-EU repository. Audit Output Illustration for EIH 1: Future and Sustainable Industries and EIH 2: Bioeconomy can be seen below.

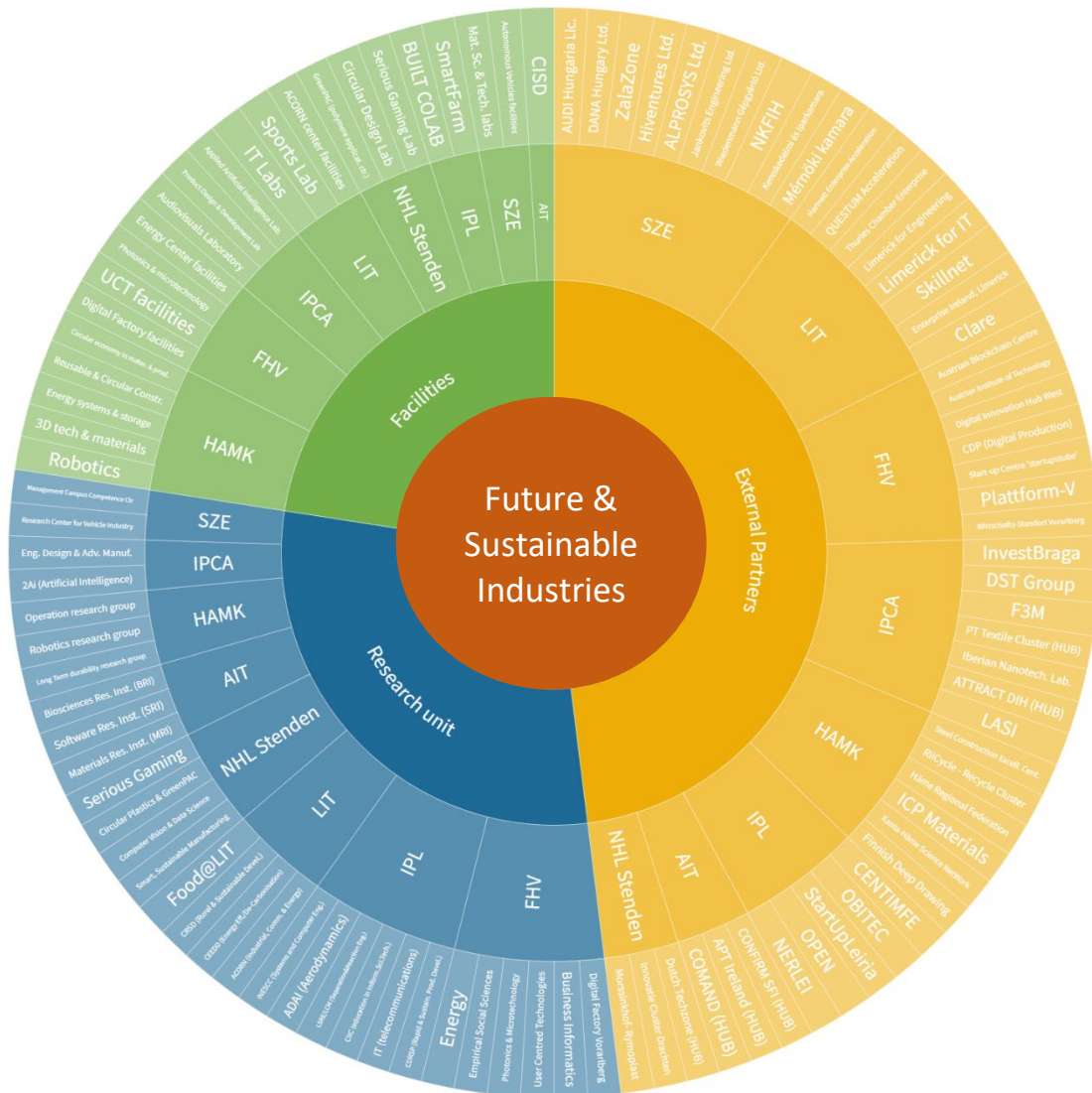


Figure 7 – Example of Research Cluster, Hub, External Partner Audit output for EI1: Future and Sustainable Industries

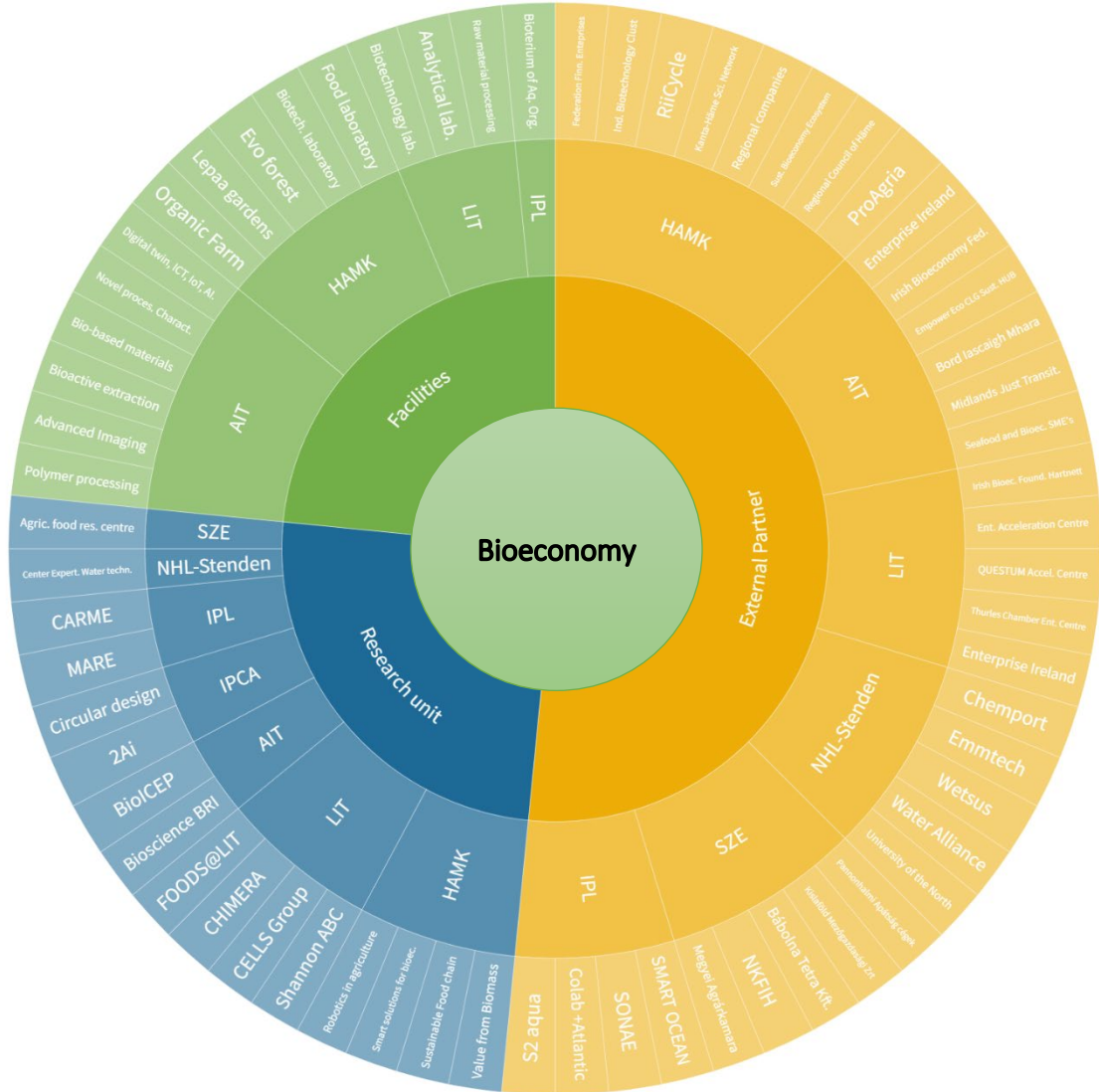


Figure 8 – Example of Research Cluster, Hub, External Partner Audit output for EI2: Bioeconomy

The next edition of this strategic plan (D2.7) will be published in November 2022.



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