

European Innovation Partnerships

The European innovation partnerships (EIP) were launched in the context of the innovation union flagship initiative in October 2010. They were set up with the aim to promote the implementation of a new innovation ecosystem in Europe. The EIPs were meant to act across policies, sectors and borders to tackle societal challenges and enhance Europe's competitiveness. A 2014 evaluation concluded that this objective would not be reached given the framework used for their implementation. With no evolution of their governance, the EIPs remain active as coordination instruments for research and innovation activities at EU level in their respective fields.

Policy context

In March 2010, the European Commission adopted its European 2020 [strategy](#) for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Under the flagship [initiative](#) on the innovation union, the Commission proposed to launch a new type of [public-private partnership](#) (PPPs) in research called the European innovation [partnerships](#) (EIP).

An instrument to promote a new European innovation ecosystem

The EIPs were presented as a new approach to address the fragmentation of efforts in research and innovation in order to tackle societal challenges and enhance Europe's competitiveness. By acting across the whole innovation ecosystem and focusing both on the demand and supply side, they would go beyond existing PPPs. The EIPs were expected to streamline, simplify, and better coordinate existing instruments in the European research landscape such as other PPPs – [European Technology Platforms](#) (ETP), [Joint Technology Initiatives](#) or [Knowledge and Innovation Communities](#) (KIC) – and the [public-public partnerships](#) – [joint programming initiatives](#) (JPI) or [Article 185 initiatives](#). This new type of partnership covering the innovation ecosystem and addressing societal challenges was proposed in an [evaluation](#) of the ETPs conducted in October 2009.

The EIPs were expected to break down the silos and bring stakeholders together across policies, sectors and borders. They were to be led by a steering group (SG) with representatives from the Member States, the European Parliament, industry leaders, and researchers, as well as key stakeholders representing non-research components of the innovation process: regulation, standards, procurement, etc. The SG's first task would be to develop a strategic implementation plan (SIP) presenting a common vision about the societal challenge concerned and identifying the bottlenecks that needed to be overcome to reach a clear target set for the partnership by the stakeholders. The Commission [insisted](#) that EIPs would not be established as a new body nor would they provide and manage funds for initiatives necessary to implement the SIP. They would act as an advisory structure to formulate suggestions on how to better align and pool resources (such as EU, national and private funding) in order to reduce the time-to-market of research and innovation breakthroughs.

The Commission suggested launching a pilot EIP on active and healthy ageing (AHA). The EIP concept was welcomed by the European Parliament, which [stressed](#) the central role of the Commission in providing the right operational framework and guidance. The Council also approved the concept, [pointing](#) out that it would take the necessary political decisions on EIPs before their launch. The European Council also gave EIPs its [support](#) in February 2011.

The complex implementation of the European innovation partnership concept

Lessons learned for the pilot European innovation partnership on active and health ageing

When setting the European innovation partnership on active and health ageing (AHA), the Commission [concluded](#) that EIP governance and processes should: be simple and flexible; help build representative and balanced partnerships; ensure that the EIPs are inclusive and open; and help provide synergies with clear relationships with existing initiatives and instruments. The Commission would act as a catalyst and arbitrator



and the stakeholders would be the owners of the EIPs and their strategic implementation plan (SIP). The EIP's success would depend on their simplicity, the partners' commitment to deliver and the mobilising power created regarding other key players. It recognised that the pilot EIP had suffered from a lack of clarity of the EIP concept. The Commission stressed that the EIPs were to 'reinforce coherence of research and innovation priorities' and that they would not 'supersede or replace other initiatives', an aspect upon which the [Parliament](#) and the [Council](#) had both insisted. The Council also [requested](#) that the Member States should be involved in the EIP decision-making process.

The strategic implementation plan (SIP) of the EIP AHA was adopted by the steering group in November 2011. The Commission presented its views on the plan in a [communication](#) adopted in February 2012. In May 2012, the Commission completed the [framework](#) for the EIPs and the Council [renewed](#) its support for the process underlining that the EIPs should respect common governance principles that recognised the specific role of the Member States. The European Parliament adopted a [resolution](#) on the EIP AHA in February 2013.

Setting up four additional EIPs

In 2012, the Commission proposed establish four additional EIPs. The EIPs on [agricultural productivity and sustainability](#) and [water](#) were validated by the Council in June 2012, respectively in its [agriculture](#) and [environment](#) configurations. The EIP on [raw material](#), developed in the context of the raw material [initiative](#) launched in November 2008, was [adopted](#) by the Council in October 2012. The [European industrial initiative](#) on smart cities was [reframed](#) as an EIP in July 2012 and was [adopted](#) by the Council in March 2013.

High ambition not matched in implementation

An independent expert group evaluated the EIP scheme in February 2014. Its [report](#) concluded that 'the ambition for the EIPs was rightfully set high' but 'current EIPs have suffered somewhat from inconsistency in execution'. It advocated for a second iteration of EIPs based on modified targets and approach. For the experts, the EIP's objective was to install a new logic of innovation policy in Europe and create a new ecosystem of innovation. The EIPs should be evaluated on their capacity to drive large scale change in Europe.

The EIPs managed to make progress on the coordination of initiatives at EU, national and regional level. They have also been effective in integrating different stakeholders and serving as an EU-wide observatory of practice in innovation. However, many EIPs lacked a clear prioritisation strategy and attempted to cover too much ground. That no single structure at the Commission was dedicated to dealing with the EIPs led to diverging views between different directorate generals (DG).

The EIPs did not bring about the systemic change expected by the experts, who considered that the current method of implementation would yield disappointing results. The expert recommendation to put the EIPs back on the right track included: establishing improved criteria to select additional EIPs; providing an architecture for systemic change with a dedicated team to guide this work; adopting clear indicators for success; and securing high level leadership and adopting an effective governance model. Implementation of these recommendations was 'necessary to turn the approach into what it was meant to be from the beginning'.

Current situation

Upon taking office in November 2014, the Commissioner for Research and Innovation, Carlos Moedas, discontinued the innovation union [policy](#). The last [report](#) on the state of the innovation union, in December 2015, noted that 'further steps need to be taken to create a consistent and dedicated EIP structure, streamlining the approaches across different EIPs'. Nevertheless, the recommendations from the expert group were not implemented and no new EIP have been established.

The Commission still provides a secretariat for the five existing EIPs, managed by different DGs depending on their topics. Existing EIP activities include the mapping and exchange of good practices, exchange of information, and networking activities. These activities are supported by an online 'market place' in some EIPs, such as [water](#) and [smart cities](#).

The EIPs pursue the objective of aligning activities in their field and influence more or less directly the Horizon 2020 work programme regarding their societal challenge as well as other partnerships at EU level (JPIs or KICs for example). Some also influence research and innovation activities at national and/or regional level. Each EIP continues operations in its own way, with little interaction between them. The SIPs have not been updated and the governance of the EIPs was not reviewed. Some EIPs are currently in the process of selecting new members for the SG.