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Summary of the discussions



26.02.2026

Financial sustainability workshop 2026

Co-organized by EIT and ERA-LEARN, supported by DG EAC and DG RTD

- Building on **legacy** (infrastructure, eco-system) and moving towards **various models**: user-driven model, model generating spin-offs to undertake certain activities; **prioritization** by default, **downsizing** as a strategic approach; understanding prioritisation (strategically, financially policy-driven); **governance** a key topic no matter where the money comes from; **strong management** team important – not only call secretariats; **multiple plans necessary**.
- Public funding **AND** (not OR) market orientation!
- Phasing out should start at day 1 – any granting activity should be backed by a 'business case' - What **business case means** - **Integrity of the org, legacy of programme and maintaining the core mission**
- **intellectual assets** are key to sustainability (IP, trademarks, licenses, etc.). not to treated as legal formalities but as core business assets leaving value

1. Current status: **different ways** membership fees can be adopted by the different PS types - membership fees in a tiered level
2. Financial threshold & fee model: Fee models should be **simple, transparent, adaptable, and aligned** with member roles and size.
3. Implementation needs & actions: rarely cover full operational or programme costs — **mainly contribute to core sustainability; a clear and credible value proposition** is essential - tangible benefits (networking, events, visibility, grant support) and transparency on return.
4. Management & challenges: Governance structure is critical: **complex governance** can block decisions, and fees are often linked to **legal status and voting rights; risk of partner dropout**; difference between shareholders and members in terms of their commitment to sustainability; **inclusiveness** challenge; **national funding constraints; EU funding reduction poses systemic risk; value proposition difficult** to demonstrate returning to simpler models

1. Current status: not in mind when starting – controversial topic
2. Value Proposition: what would the mission be? (eco-system market fee) All stakeholders benefit from PS activities; good idea joining forces to bridge the gap in TRL to cover full cycle
3. Implementation requirements: change of legal structure when funding stops; value proposition
4. Management & challenges: think about what you really want to be come tomorrow: more strategically thinking and use current funding to make it real

1. Current status: **KICs diversity of sources** (also revenue sharing, equity, etc.); business plans discussed every 3 yrs – **PS mainly public funds**, addressing areas of high public interest; synergies down the TRL (EIT UM and NetZeroCities and DUT)
2. EU, national, and regional funding instruments: other DGs and HE sources – need established **legal body**; some **different expertise and skills** might be needed; EIT mission to dedicated activities in RIS countries; KIC can be a tool for **implementation of national/regional policies**
3. Implementation capacities and governance structures : **co-location centres** tapping into national/regional capacities, eco-systems and sources – need strong local actors; **lean and clean operational model**; added value to members / Main challenges: **legal entity** to enable participation (+ exploit IP); funder organizations as partners; **culture for FS, business mindset, different kind of language** important in governance.
4. Opportunities: **capitalize** on established networks, expertise, capacities; continue to develop strategies based on **diverse funding sources**.

- 1. Improved understanding** of FS approaches: alternative income sources; education revenue; membership fees; services and consulting, alternative funding, complementarity of different pathways? special conditions for each model; a clear and credible value proposition is essential - tangible benefits (networking, events, visibility, grant support) and transparency on return, etc.
- 2. Guidance and exchange** of experience to implementation; legal entity, conditions for the different funding models, more innovation-oriented calls or hubs, co-location centres connection to national/regional eco-systems, a clear and credible value proposition and transparency on return, etc.
- 3. Supporting each other:** networking, information sharing, memberships in governing bodies, strategic alignment, strengthen complementarity of projects, share results, scope activities to establish complementarity in call topics, participate as partner (examples of EIT UM).
- 4. Channeling follow-on projects to higher TRL instruments and programmes** (example InnoSMEs, EIT accelerator, Flagships, etc.).

Actionable recommendations for collaboration for

- **Mapping** instruments, initiatives, sources, requirements, constraints, solutions, etc.;
- **Systematic exchange** (+guidance, advise, etc. legal entity, alternative income sources, business cases, value proposition, valorization, governance adjustment, mentality change, etc.);
- **Complementarity of diverse funding**: define core activities and core budget levels and decide which types of activities can be funded by which funding model.
- **Strategic synergies** among PS, KICs, and other initiatives to build connections to advance support whole TRL pathway - systematic raising awareness and efforts to make connections **need to be centrally organized** (EC, ERA-LEARN?); more **systematic efforts** needed. Time needed for more concrete actions to mature and become visible.



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Thank you.

