

The EIT and its Innovation Communities presents:

CONNECT & EXPERIENCE SV: Bridging Ecosystems 2023

We are excited to officially open the call for the 2023 Connect & Experience (C&E) cohort. We invite you to join the European-Silicon Valley community that offers a platform for peer-learning and collaboration, aimed at enhancing open innovation and transatlantic business creation in your ecosystem.

Who are we? The [EIT Hub Silicon Valley](#) is an initiative of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), aimed to create synergies between the European and the US East Coast innovation ecosystem to support the growth of innovative start-ups and increase the number of EU-US collaborative projects.

Call for participation

You are invited to apply to a one-of-a-kind, interactive programme and become part of an exclusive European-Silicon Valley active innovation community.

What is Connect & Experience?

The programme encompasses three elements:

1. Intensive 5 day in-person professional training in Silicon Valley (26-30 November 2023)
2. European "Connect & Experience Playground" follow up conference (March 2024)
3. Full access to the Connect & Experience innovation community network

1. Professional Training in Silicon Valley

This full stack 5-day immersion into the Silicon Valley ecosystem goes beyond the usual introductions, and drills down to the key drivers of ecosystem building. Key drivers include government funding schemes, academia and startups, the role of community builders, corporates and more. This deep dive is designed to provide a genuine insight into what could be considered the most fascinating ecosystems in the world, all while providing the highest practical value and impact on participants.

The programme is highlighted by the brand names of the Silicon Valley ecosystem who will share their experience and describe their role in making Silicon Valley the innovation success it is today. The programme will leverage existing know-how and best practices, will provide a broad access to mentors, hands-on training and tools to commercialize & scale-up ideas, research and IP to better support your innovations. It will also focus on how to build a sustainable transatlantic system in the process. The programme will begin with a retreat – a method to build ecosystems and create value. EIT Hub Silicon Valley will also host Networking activities, providing a platform for business creation, and knowledge transfer. During the programme, global trends and challenges for innovation leaders, will be analyzed offering a fresh perspective and take on innovation & ecosystem management.

2. "Connect & Experience Playground" Follow up Conference

The annual highlight of the C&E community network - European Playground is a professional conference that offers practical tools and strategies to develop and manage innovation communities and start-up support systems, bringing together professionals from all across Europe, Silicon Valley and Israel.

Members will be offered the opportunity to design and co-facilitate content and workshops with a peer who has experience in connecting the public and private sector, as well as start-ups and corporate players. As such, the playground can be used as a testbed for new ideas and initiatives, receiving real time feedback and potential collaborations from leading experts in the field.

C&E alumni of 2023 will be entitled to a complementary ticket to the Playground if they are eligible for reimbursement (ticket value EUR 350).

3. Full access to the active C&E Community Network

Connect & Experience offers more than training. The C&E community network is an active EU-Global online and offline community offering easy access to opportunities, curated content, matchmaking, soft landing services and support. The community offers a space for community builders from Silicon Valley, Israel and Europe to interact, share best practices and collaborate, with the common goal of enhancing your start-up community.

Why should I apply?

- A leading program with a high caliber of participants and expert facilitators;
- Provides you with top tools to become a leader in your field by learning best practices of ecosystem management, including community building, tech tools, network leveraging and more;
- Experience the innovation creation, and effective tools to support it, developed exclusively for the 2023 cohort;
- Get immersed and build sustainable partnerships in the most innovative region in the world;
- Explore opportunities to partner with EIT to access the Silicon Valley market and get co-funding of up to EUR20,000¹;
- Become a part of a closed community network of strategic players in ecosystem building, get ongoing support, access to events and a matchmaking service from the EIT Global outreach.

¹ The EIT will co-fund business proposals that create new partnerships with EIT Hub Silicon Valley, that have high business maturity according to the C&E experts panel (Annex2) and they are not more than 3 per cohort (0-3 proposals per cohort).

The ideal participant is a European

The ideal participant is a European **experienced senior professional, at management/decision making level**, in an organisation boosting European innovation growth and significantly impacting the European ecosystem. The participant should deal with innovation or business creation, with a minimum of 5 years of relevant professional experience from at least one of the following sectors: industry, academia, government. As such, they should be able to contribute knowledge, experience and network to the programme and provide added value to their peers.

For example: VCs, TTOs, Heads of: accelerators, Innovation agencies, Research Centers, incubators, or other business creation activities from academia, industry and government.

The programme is not suited for individual start-ups or consultants.

Eligible applicants are divided in to four categories:

1. EIT KIC Partners² and KIC cooperating entities under the EIT Regional Innovation Scheme (RIS) from the 6 KIC's involved in the EIT Silicon Valley Hub - EIT Climate- KIC, EIT Culture & Creativity EIT Digital, EIT Food, EIT Health and EIT Manufacturing.
2. EIT KIC Staff - from 6 KIC's involved in the EIT Hub Silicon Valley - EIT Climate- KIC, EIT Culture & Creativity EIT Digital, EIT Food, EIT Health and EIT Manufacturing.
3. Partner/staff from other KIC's - EIT InnoEnergy, and EIT RawMaterials, and EIT Urban Mobility.
4. Ecosystem/Innovation/Education Managers, non-EIT Partners

Assessment Process:

Each application will be reviewed and ranked by the following criteria:

- Impact of your organization /programme on the European Innovation ecosystem– 30% of the score
- Professional role and seniority level – 20% of the score
- Motivation, added value to the programme, and maturity of your transatlantic business creation proposal. – 40% of the score
- Diversity. The cohort aims to represent the diversity of the European ecosystem. – 10% of the score
- An individual online interview might be scheduled as an additional evaluation criterion.

The selection will be competitive and based upon excellence and the above noted criteria. The final selection will be made by the EIT Silicon Valley Cross KIC Steering Committee (with members representing the KICs). The applicants that were not selected but got into reserve list will be notified between 11-16 of October if they will be joining the programme in case of cancellations.

Finance:

The full cost of the programme is 8,000 EUR, however EIT Hub Silicon Valley can offer partial funding of the programmes and/or Travel & Accommodation reimbursement based on the following categories:

Category Number	Participant Category	Eligible KIC's	Eligibility for Programme Funding	Eligibility for Travel and Accommodation Reimbursement
1	KIC Partners and KIC cooperating entities under the EIT Regional Innovation Scheme(RIS)	6 KIC's: EIT Climate- KIC, EIT Culture & Creativity, EIT Digital, EIT Food, EIT Health and EIT Manufacturing.	75% Funded; Price: €2,000	Reimbursement up to €2,800 per participant per module
2	KIC Staff	6 KIC's: EIT Climate- KIC, EIT Culture & Creativity EIT Digital, EIT Food, EIT Health and EIT Manufacturing.	Fully funded	Financed by the KIC's own resources. Grants will be available for KIC staff under special conditions.
3	Partner/Staff from other KIC's	EIT InnoEnergy, EIT RawMaterials, and EIT Urban Mobility	75% Funded; Price: €2,000	Financed by participant own resources
4	Ecosystem Leader (Non EIT)	Any individual professional can apply.	Early Bird ³ 50% Funded; Price: €4,000	Financed by participant own resources

The EIT Hub Silicon Valley will award up to 3 "Golden Tickets" to exceptional Partner/Non-EIT organizations, making them eligible for up to 100% discounts. The evaluation of applications will be conducted by the EIT Silicon Valley Cross KIC Steering Committee, focusing on organizations with strong business creation ideas or individuals with strong professional profiles.

² All 9 KIC's are invited to apply, however funding will be offered to the 6 KIC's active in the EIT Hub Silicon Valley: EIT Climate- KIC, EIT Culture & Creativity, EIT Digital, EIT Food, EIT Health and EIT Manufacturing. See more in the finance section.

Timeline:

Call for applications:

- Application Opening: 1st August 2023
- Application Closes: 1st October 2023 (23:59, CET)
- Selection announcement and travel arrangements – by 11th October 2023
- Onboarding webinar (for accepted participants) – 16th October 2023, 10:00 CET

Agenda:

- **DAY0: Welcome to Silicon Valley** | Tour in San Francisco, followed by arrival to the Connect & Experience retreat, a unique experience that combines professional and mental growth to help you and your ecosystem thrive and a community to start forming.
- **DAY1: Welcome Europeans to the Silicon Valley Ecosystem** | Silicon Valley leaders will join the programme with the aim of fostering connections and collaboration between the Silicon Valley and European innovation ecosystems, by creating a platform for deepening relationships and forging meaningful partnerships. Through engaging panel discussions, interactive workshops, and networking sessions, you will have the opportunity to share insights, exchange ideas, and explore potential synergies.
- **DAY2: Deep Dive into the Silicon Valley Innovation Ecosystem** | The aim of the day is to expose the participants to the unique structure, key success factors and methods that created the Silicon Valley the capital of innovation. We will learn the deep connections and roots of the innovation landscape in the traditional economy and how incentivized innovation transformed the Silicon Valley industries and society.
- **DAY3: Innovation & Business Leaders in Silicon Valley** | Silicon Valley is world's leading hub of high-tech innovation, known for creating tech giants, and an ideal location to nurture and grow your fledgling startups. We will focus on Silicon Valley as a great learning ground for ecosystem development and learn from the people that have managed to create a supportive and nurturing environment against all odds. We will meet key organizations who will share how they build a successful, organic ecosystem by leveraging upon MNCs, start-ups and talents.
- **DAY4: Education & Research Leaders in Silicon Valley** | Silicon Valley, renowned for its technological innovation and world-class universities like Stanford and Berkeley, has established itself as a hub for cutting-edge research, transformative educational programs, and successful technology transfer initiatives. We will delve into innovation that arise from its unique blend of academic excellence and entrepreneurial spirit. We will have the chance to engage with key organizations and individuals who have harnessed the power of partnerships between universities, industry leaders, and talented individuals. Through these interactions, we will gain insights into the strategies employed to leverage the resources and expertise of major multinational corporations, startups, and exceptional talent, ultimately paving the way for future advancements in education, technology transfer, research, and innovation.
- **DAY 5: Building Bridges** | After you were exposed to the Silicon Valley Ecosystem, it's time to reflect and think of what's next. On the last day, we will focus on externalizing your ecosystem and understanding your ecosystem UVP based. We will also discuss how we can tailor the lessons and opportunities learned in Silicon Valley to your unique ecosystem characteristics. During the day, you will have the opportunity to pitch your ideas on bridging your ecosystem with Silicon Valley and get up to EUR20,000 of co-funding to launch it in collaboration with EIT Hub Silicon Valley. We will expose the C&E community and share future plans and events.

FAQ

Does the programme require me to physically attend the week in Silicon Valley?

Yes, participation physically in Silicon Valley is required, and it is the core Connect & Experience event that provides you with professional training, and builds the community. You will have the chance to travel round the country, meet US peers and learn from one of the world's leading innovation ecosystems.

Who will we meet during the programme?

The cohort will be comprised of ecosystem – innovation & education leaders from all over Europe that were carefully selected to join the programme. You will meet peers and innovation leaders from Silicon Valley, top speakers and lecturers on a number of different topics, executives from global companies active in Silicon Valley, and many more. Finally, you will have the opportunity to discuss with all key actors in the region including tech giants, VCs, startups, universities and accelerators ie from Apple, Microsoft, Plug & Play, MTB, Stanford University etc. (The agenda is tentative and subject to changes)

Who is considered an ecosystem leader?

An ecosystem leader is an experienced senior professional, at management/decision-making level, in an organisation boosting European start-up growth, significantly impacting the European ecosystem. They should deal with innovation or business creation in any of the following sectors: industry, academia, government. For example, VCs, TTOs, Heads of: accelerators, Innovation agencies, Research Centers, incubators, or other business creation activities from academia, industry and government.

What topics will be covered during the bootcamp in Silicon Valley?

The programme encompasses a wide variety of subjects, including an overview of the Silicon Valley ecosystem and meetings with leading figures from the industry. You will have the chance to get your hands 'dirty' and delve into an ecosystem building workshop, learn best practices, become inspired by the many opportunities that will expose themselves and test your transatlantic business creation ideas.

How much does the programme cost?

This depends on a financial category that varies from participant to participant. Check out the finance section for more information.

What does the selection process look like?

The applicants will be ranked according to the criteria noted here and the final decision as to the participants will be made by the Global Outreach steering committee. Applicants will receive responses by **11th October**. If you wish to submit a complaint about the answer you got following the selection process, you can email us: orestis.trasanidis@eitdigital.eu

Please explain your complaint as clearly as possible, deadline: **15 October, 2023**.

What can I expect as an outcome of the programme?

Past participants of EIT connect & experience programmes have established long standing collaborations with both local experts and members of the cohort. You can expect to be left with a change of mindset that will enable you to approach your future activities with a new found sense of purpose, a tangible pathway to establish the best practices you were exposed, as well as support to launch your transatlantic activities. The Connect & Experience community is extremely active with joint ventures taking place on a weekly basis, you can expect to expand your network and be part of a supportive and professional group of people.

Why Silicon Valley ecosystem?

The Silicon Valley ecosystem renowned as the Innovation Capital of the world is the global center for high technology and innovation. Silicon Valley has the highest number of scale-ups and capital raised in the world. The ecosystem has cultivated a culture of innovation, encouraged creativity and risk-taking, that supported early-stage startups, and encouraged collaboration. Silicon Valley is the global innovation trend setter as is home to some of the world's most successful and innovative companies.

Annex 1: Sub-grant Agreement

[EIT Digital Sub-grant Agreement](#)

Annex 2:

The call for co-funding is open to C&E participants who wish to launch transatlantic activities that meet the established criteria. All proposers should carefully read the criteria in preparation for their proposals.

- A clear description of the business plan/opportunity that aligns with the EIT KICs focus areas and enhances transatlantic cooperation.
- Evidence that partner contributes to the activity with valuable assets, including but not limited to IP, technology, freedom to operate.
- An idea with the capacity to create or disrupt markets and a work plan that can achieve the objectives set.
- A financial plan is required with a clear description of how the resources allocated will be financed.
- Venture team relevance as well as their long-term commitment to the venture.
- Activities are requested to contribute to the financial sustainability of EIT Hub Silicon Valley.



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