

Circular Slovenia: a national, strategic approach

Aims of governance measure

Slovenia is working towards embedding circular economy as a strategic development priority, with the aim of achieving 'rapid transformation into inclusive, prosperous, circular and zero-carbon communities by 2030'. As such, circular economy is included in key national documents and strategies such as the Vision for Slovenia in 2050, the Slovenian Development Strategy 2030, Slovenia's Smart Specialisation Strategy, and the long-term climate strategy, which is in preparation. Most fundamentally however, in November 2019, the Slovenian parliament passed a motion to adopt a European Institute of Innovation and

Technology Climate-Knowledge Innovation Communities (EIT Climate-KIC) proposal: 'A Deep Demonstration of a Circular, Regenerative and Low-Carbon Economy in Slovenia'.

Drivers for strategic approach

The Deep Demonstration proposal marks an important stage in an ongoing process, led by the Slovenian Government, which is outlined in Figure 1. The drivers for initiating the Deep Demonstration are decarbonising the economy, transforming communities and promoting wellbeing and prosperity.



Figure 1: Timeline outlining Slovenia's journey with the EIT.

Explainer: Understanding the EIT initiatives

[EIT RIS](#) was introduced in 2014 as an outreach vehicle to include less involved and underrepresented areas of Europe in the EIT schemes, as well as those where innovation would be most effective in addressing community needs. [EIT KICs](#) are open innovation partnerships between businesses, higher education institutions and research organisations. They seek to explore societal challenges, create environments that facilitate innovation and affect transformative change. There are eight EIT KICs focusing on, for example, food, health and manufacturing. The [EIT Climate-KIC](#) is 'working to accelerate the transition to a zero-carbon economy.' In 2019, the EIT Climate-KIC launched eight [Deep Demonstration](#) projects. These aim to 'achieve rapid systemic change, working with whole countries, regions, cities, landscapes and sectors'. They provide a 'test bed environment' for innovations working towards a net-zero economy, with the focus on systems approaches and scalable, transformative initiatives.

Actions, activities, and delivery mechanisms

Slovenia's Deep Demonstration commits the country to becoming fully circular and focuses on tackling material production and waste flows across five key sectors: Forestry, built environment, manufacturing, food, and mobility. It involves training, education and capacity-building to create change agents, foster life-long learning and disseminate insights and good practices. It will also promote innovative policy initiatives and experiments to ensure enabling conditions for transformative change. The Deep Demonstration is built around three pillars: Smart and circular communities, circular green development, and circular policy design and science. A physical hub in the form of the Slovenian Centre for Smart and Circular Transition will act as the 'beating heart' of the initiative, offering a space for knowledge sharing and dissemination.

The Deep Demonstration activities have four iterative stages associated with them (see Figure 2).

Slovenia has, thus far, completed a first iteration of the 'Intent' component, is currently creating a 'Frame' for action and has plans in place for the 'Portfolio' phase. These are summarised in Table 1.

Activities so far have included education, business creation and acceleration services for start-ups and innovators. The Slovenia Hub has a cooperation with Technology Park Ljubljana. In 2020, seven climate-positive start-ups were allocated €120,000 as well as training, coaching and workshops to help them develop. Examples include EVERGREEN, which has developed a new type of biodegradable material, made from agricultural waste, that degrades in soil, ZERO CARBON, which has launched a new water hydration station product, and SPARK Inovacije, which works on road and transport optimization to cut greenhouse emissions.

More recently, activities have focused on urban transformation as well as integrating rural and urban initiatives. Although urban areas in Slovenia are not huge by global standards, work in this area is seen as critical in achieving the transformation potential of the

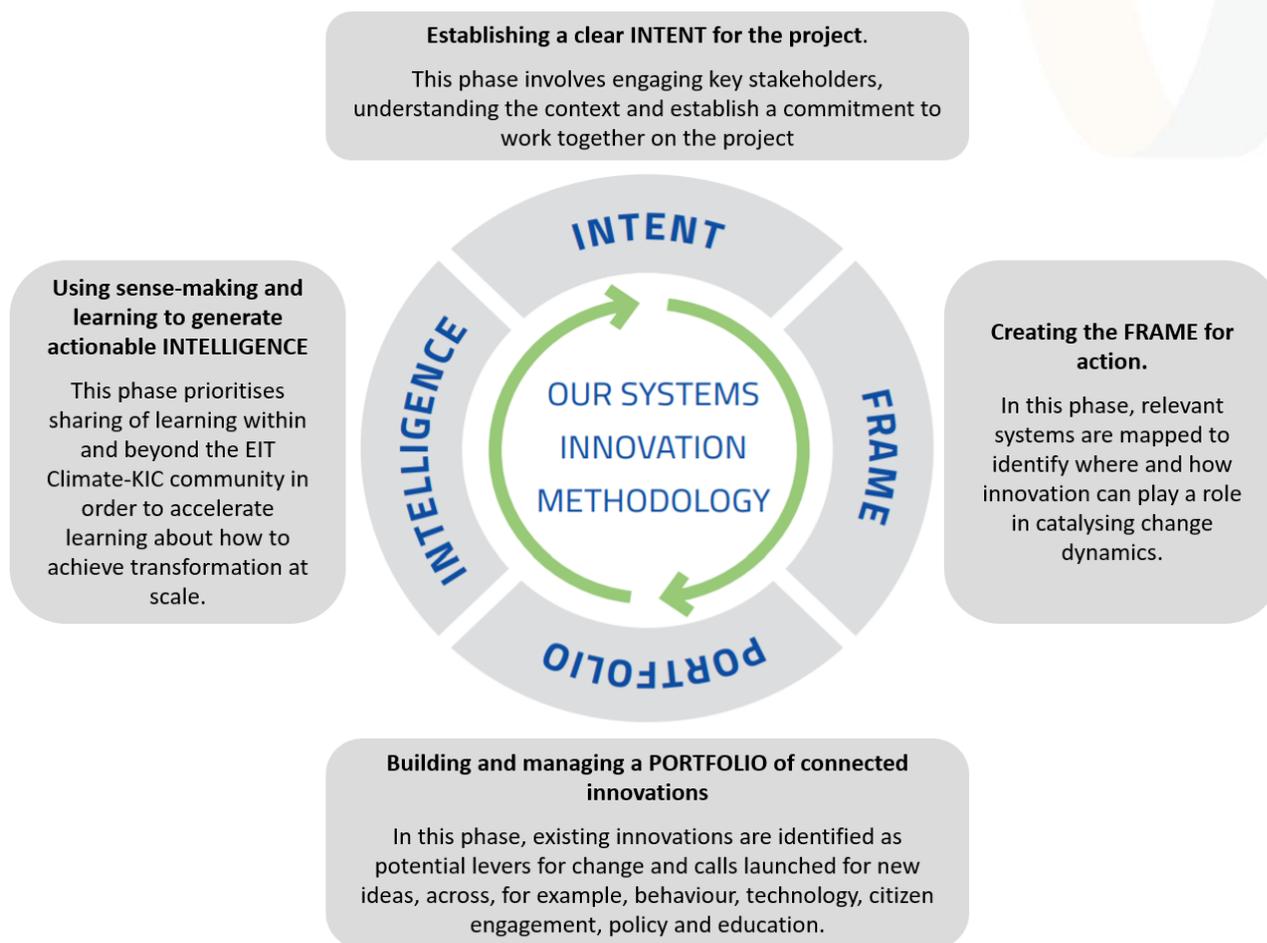


Figure 2: The four stages of an EIT Climate-KIC Deep Demonstration. Adapted from Deep Demonstrations Factsheet series 1.1.

Deep Demonstration. Activities in urban areas includes 'strengthening cross-community collaboration and implementation partnerships, scoping projects to deliver systemic change, helping city professionals to build capacity and skills to accelerate action, and shaping business models to attract implementation funding and financing at the scale needed'.

Emerging successes

The Deep Demonstration involves stakeholders from across sectors, working in partnership towards the same aim and with the backing of European-level support. It was clear from literature around the initiative that roles and responsibilities are well-defined and cover much ground. The 'challenge owners' are the Government of Slovenia, with eight Ministries involved, including Education, Science and Sport, Economic Development and Technology, and Agriculture, Forestry and Food.

One of the key activities that has led to success is the formation of a strategic collaboration with Deep Demonstration 'systems designers' the [Joint Research Centre](#) and [EIT Raw Materials](#). Further key stakeholders include partners such as [CO NOT](#), the [National Institute of Chemistry](#), and [E-zavod](#), who has been more recently involved to work with cities and local communities. This emphasis on involving and activating local communities, civil servants, students and younger generations, teachers and other change

agents, together with researchers and academics, non-governmental and non-profit organisations, Chambers of Commerce and Industry, and associations has been integral to the success of the work. Strategic Research and Innovation Partnerships (SRIPs), start-ups, SMEs and companies, are engaged alongside public and third sector bodies: the SRIPs in particular are seen as critical in providing liaison with the Government and a 'framework for collaboration and co-creation'.

Looking forward & next steps

There are a number of areas of focus for the project in the coming years as it moves into the 'portfolio' phase. Developing and consolidating partnerships between Slovenian authorities and other stakeholder is seen as absolutely key, as is involving the younger generations to raise awareness around how they can contribute to activities. While it isn't clear what impact COVID-19 has had on the Deep Demonstration, the project seems to holding its own. January 2021 saw [Apolitical](#), the peer-to-peer learning platform for governments, include Slovenia's Deep Demonstration as one of its [100 Climate Policy Breakthroughs](#). This list 'celebrates meaningful climate action and impactful policies from around the world with the potential for scalability and effective change'.

W: <https://circulareconomy.leeds.ac.uk/>

 @LabYorkshire

 Yorkshire Circular Lab

