

1) **Fiche to be used for each step:**

<p>The step under review</p>	<p>Introduce a system for matchmaking between SMEs and EIC/EIT funding with co-funding from INOVA (FITD) in the priority areas of the Smart specialization strategy (SSS), including of Smart agriculture and food with higher added value, Electro-mechanical industry - Industry 4.0, ICT.</p>
<p>Baseline</p>	<p>Baseline (2024) is 0.</p>
<p>Deadline of the step</p>	<p>December 2025</p>
<p>Actual results</p>	<p>The following results have been achieved:</p> <p>Result 1: The new Law on Innovation Activity, Scientific and Technological Development and Entrepreneurship (the Law) was adopted on July 29, 2025 (Official Gazette no. 154 of 29.07.2025) and its amendment (to the Law on Innovation Activity, Scientific and Technological Development and Entrepreneurship) which was adopted on September 17, 2025 (Official Gazette no. 192/25 from 17.09.2025)</p> <p>A new Agency for Innovation, Scientific and Technological Development and Entrepreneurship (INOVA) was established on the basis of the abovementioned law in August 2025, as a successor of the Fund for Innovation and Technological Development (FITD) and the Agency for Promotion of Entrepreneurship (APPRM), as stated in Article 53, paragraph 1 and 2 of the Law.</p> <p>INOVA's mission is to facilitate access to finance for innovation and technological development and to encourage and promote the innovation activity, scientific and technological development and entrepreneurship. The INOVA's activities include managing funding instruments, facilitating access to international and domestic financial resources, supporting startups and self-employment, youth & STEM initiatives and innovation infrastructure; fostering cooperation between academia and industry; and promoting global best practices. The Agency also conducts research, maintains relevant databases, and works to align national policies with international innovation standards.</p> <p>The financial instruments and measures of INOVA (Article 28 of the Law) include SME Support Instruments: co-financed grants for start-ups, spin-offs, co-financed grants for commercialization of innovations, co-financed grants for technological development, co-financed grants for accelerators and technology extension, co-financed grants in the area of smart specialization, thematic challenges, hackathons and competitions; and other financial instruments as stipulated within the Law.</p> <p>Furthermore, the new Law establishes that European instruments, including European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) and the European Innovation Council (EIC) are eligible for co-funding by INOVA. Pursuant to Article 28, paragraph</p>

(3), point 2 of the Law, INOVA is mandated to implement financing measures that facilitate access for Macedonian innovative companies to European funds and new markets. Accordingly, the matchmaking measure underpinning Reform 4.1.4, Step 1, falls within INOVA's competence.

Result 2: Adoption of the Rulebook of facilitating the access of Macedonian enterprises, higher education and scientific institutions to the funds of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) and the European Innovation Council (EIC).

The objective of the instrument is to increase the participation of Macedonian companies, higher-education institutions, and research organizations in European programmes, in particular the EIT and the EIC, and thereby to increase the innovation, research publications, and collaborative projects. Priority is given to projects from the domains identified in Smart Specialization Strategy of North Macedonia 2024 – 2027, i.e. the priority areas with highest economic, innovative and research capacities:

- Vertical priority areas: Smart agriculture and value-added food; Information and communication technologies (ICT); Electro-mechanical industry – Industry 4.0; and Sustainable materials and smart buildings; and
- Horizontal priority areas: tourism and energy of the future.

The Rulebook regulates: the procedure for publishing and implementing public calls; the submission and evaluation of applications; eligibility conditions and selection criteria; the forms, rates, and limits of financial support; verification procedures and reporting obligations of both the Agency/other competent public body and the beneficiaries; measures to ensure transparency and prevent conflicts of interest; and other related provisions.

The mechanism provides **technical and financial support** to micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises, as well as to higher education and research institutions that meet the eligibility criteria for technical assistance and/or co-funding.

1. **Technical support** entails the financing of consultancy services aimed at project preparation for applications to EIT and EIC calls. In order to qualify for such support, applicants must meet the criteria set out in the Rulebook. Funds may be granted only if applicants demonstrate that they have successfully applied to an EIT or EIC call. The amounts for technical support range from EUR 1,000 to EUR 10,000.

2. **Financial support** entails co-financing of a project for which the applicant has already received prior confirmation or has concluded an agreement confirming that funding has been awarded by the EIT or EIC. The applicant may receive co-financing of up to 50% of his own contribution to the project, with a maximum amount of EUR 20,000. Subject to the conditions laid down in the Rulebook, the applicant may also be eligible for coverage of EIT membership fees during the first year of financing.

The Rulebook defines the system for coordination and cooperation with the EIT and the EIC, taking into account existing mechanisms applied in countries across the

	<p>region. It was prepared in consultation with members of a working group composed of representatives from the Ministry of Economy and Labor (MEL), the Ministry of Education and Science (MES), and the EIT Community RIS Hub set up in North Macedonia.</p> <p>The financing of this measure is provided under INOVA's 2026 Annual Work Plan. The instrument is set to be financed starting from 2026, with a total allocation of EUR 150,000.</p>
<p>Evidence provided</p>	<p>The following evidence are provided:</p> <p>Annex 1-Law on Innovation Activity, Scientific and Technological Development and Entrepreneurship (Official Gazette no.1 54/25 from 29.07.2025), and the Law amending the Law on Innovation Activity, Scientific and Technological Development and Entrepreneurship (Official Gazette no.192/25 from 17.09.2025),</p> <p>Annex 2 – Rulebook of facilitating the access of Macedonian enterprises, higher education and scientific institutions to the funds of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) and the European Innovation Council (EIC) (adopted on 26.12.2025)- MK version,</p> <p>Annex 3 – Rulebook of facilitating the access of Macedonian enterprises, higher education and scientific institutions to the funds of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) and the European Innovation Council (EIC) (adopted on 26.12.2025) - ENG version,</p> <p>Annex 4 – INOVA's 2026 Annual Work Plan.</p>
<p>Checks performed in the verification of the step and related findings</p>	<p><u>Law on innovation activity, scientific and technological development and entrepreneurship (Official Gazette no.154/25 from 29.07.2025 and Official Gazette no.192/25),</u></p> <p>The law was prepared by intersectoral working group.</p> <p>Namely, the comments of the Working Group (WG) (consisted of members of all relevant government bodies such as the MES, MEL, APPRM, FITR, Cabinet of the Prime Minister Office and MDT.) for preparation of the Law were taken into consideration and were incorporated in the Law. Several meetings were also organised during the consultation process during the drafting of the Law. After its finalisation, the Law was put on for public consultation on ENER system and adopted after the finalization of the consultation process with the relevant stakeholders too.</p> <p><u>The Rulebook of facilitating the access of Macedonian enterprises, higher education and scientific institutions to the funds of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) and the European Innovation Council (EIC)</u></p> <p>In order to include all relevant stakeholders in preparation of the Rulebook, the INOVA established a WG. The WG was consisted of one member and one deputy member of each of the following three institutions: MES, MEL and the EIT Community RIS Hub of North Macedonia. During the preparation process the members of the WG</p>

	<p>had two meetings. The first was an introductory meeting on which the members were asked to collect and send to INOVA all data on current state and activity of Macedonian companies on EIT/EIC calls. After receiving the relevant input information, the staff of INOVA started to develop the Rulebook.</p> <p>Rulebook was sent to the WG for review after which the second and final meetings of the WG was held. The comments of the members were taken into consideration in the preparation of the Rulebook and most of them were incorporated in its final version. The Rulebook was reviewed by the Management Board of INOVA, and on 26.12.2025, it was adopted by INOVA's Acting Director.</p>
<p>Compliance with general principles and DNSH principle</p>	<p>The implementation does not contravene the general principles outlined in Article 4 and 11(4) of Regulation (EU) 2024/1449 and Article 3 of the Facility Agreement.</p> <p>The implementation of the steps does not contravene the 'Do No Significant Harm' principle (DNSH).</p> <p>Both, the Law and the Rulebook, were developed through an inclusive, transparent, and evidence-based process, involving an institutional working group and, for the Law, there was a broad public consultation via ENER. The principles of transparency, accountability and complementarity were respected.</p>
<p>Double funding</p>	<p>Contributions from third parties were not reported in support of the achievement of this step.</p>
<p>Clear conclusion on the achievement of the step</p>	<p>Fully achieved</p>