
DIRECTOR OF INNOVATION

Location:

Hybrid, based in one of EIT Water's Regional Hub locations (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Germany, Spain, UK).

Candidates must reside in the European Union or UK, have the right to work in their country of employment and be willing to undertake regular European travel, including to EIT Water's Head Office in Aarhus.

Contract:

Fixed term, 3 years with the potential to extend for a further 3 years

Ideal Start Date:

November 1, 2026

How to Apply:

Send your CV and covering letter to recruitment@eitwater.eu

ABOUT EIT WATER

EIT Water brings together organisations across Europe's water, marine and maritime sectors to accelerate innovation, develop talent and create lasting impact. Through our European ecosystem of members, universities, businesses, public authorities and other partners, we connect knowledge, skills and innovation to address the sector's most pressing challenges.

THE ROLE

We are looking for an entrepreneurial and strategic Director of Innovation to design, lead and orchestrate its Innovation portfolio and turn strategic priorities into tangible, scalable impact.

This is a strategic leadership role for someone who can operate at the intersection of strategy, technology, investment, partnerships and real-world deployment. You will translate strategic priorities, regional intelligence, emerging solutions and the needs of challenge owners into programmes and investments that move innovation from validation to demonstration, adoption, replication and scale.

Reporting into the Chief Impact Officer, you will own the Innovation portfolio, budget, performance and strategic direction. You will connect challenges, solutions, partners and ecosystems across

Europe and create the conditions for innovation to move from development to deployment and measurable system-level impact.

YOUR IMPACT

You will:

- **Set the strategy and portfolio:** Develop a coherent Innovation portfolio aligned with EIT Water's strategic priorities, balancing challenges, regions, innovation maturity, risk and impact, while ensuring strong connections between Innovation, Education and Business Creation.
- **Turn strategy into execution:** Translate market trends, policy and regional intelligence into programme priorities, calls, investment priorities, partnerships and measurable outcomes.
- **Build a strong European innovation pipeline:** Identify high-potential technological, operational, financial, policy and nature-based solutions and connect them with real-world challenges and opportunities.
- **Orchestrate delivery through partners:** Work with EIT Water members, Regional Hubs and ecosystem partners rather than relying on direct delivery. You will ensure quality, performance, governance and strategic alignment.
- **Drive demonstration, adoption and scale:** Build partnerships with utilities, municipalities, ports, industry and other adopters to create pathways from validation and demonstration to replication and market uptake.
- **Own financial sustainability:** Manage the Innovation portfolio budget while identifying opportunities for diversified funding, co-investment and other sustainable financing mechanisms.
- **Connect regions and markets:** Balance a common European programme architecture with regional adaptation and enable solutions, expertise and adopters to connect across borders.
- **Build the ecosystem:** Develop trusted relationships with universities, research organisations, corporates, utilities, public authorities, technology providers, innovation centres and other ecosystem partners.
- **Own quality, delivery and impact:** Establish meaningful KPIs and portfolio governance, using evidence and insight to strengthen performance, impact and scaling opportunities.
- **Develop the team:** Lead and develop a high-performing Innovation team, establish clear accountability and foster a collaborative, entrepreneurial and impact-focused culture.

You will lead a dedicated Innovation team and work closely with the Directors of Education and Business Creation and EIT Water's wider leadership community.

WHAT YOU BRING

We are looking for a senior leader with:

- Master's degree or equivalent professional experience in innovation, engineering, science, technology, business, environmental or water management, public policy or a related field.
- 10+ years' experience leading innovation portfolios, demonstration programmes, technology deployment or systemic innovation.
- Proven track record of moving innovations from validation through demonstration, adoption, replication and deployment, with a clear understanding of readiness and scaling barriers.
- Sector knowledge of the European water, marine and maritime sector and its sustainability challenges.
- Programme portfolio leadership, with proven experience managing complex multi-partner innovation programmes and investment portfolios.
- European ecosystem experience, ideally across multinational partnerships, innovation ecosystems or publicly funded programmes; EIT/KIC or EU programme experience is an advantage.
- Strategic impact delivery, translating priorities into measurable business and ecosystem outcomes.

SKILLS & COMPETENCIES

Success in this role requires more than deep functional expertise. You will be a portfolio leader, ecosystem builder and strategic orchestrator who can move confidently between strategy and execution.

In particular, you will bring:

- **Strategic leadership:** the ability to turn organisational strategy into clear priorities, portfolios and programmes.
- **Innovation design & scaling :** Design, launch and scale innovation, demonstration and adoption programmes.
- **Portfolio management:** Prioritise investments, manage risk and performance, and maximise impact and value.
- **Ecosystem leadership:** Develop strong European networks across research, industry, public authorities, adopters and innovation organisations.
- **Partnership building:** Create trusted partnerships and connect complementary capabilities, opportunities and stakeholders.
- **Stakeholder management:** confidence influencing senior stakeholders and building trusted relationships across sectors and cultures.

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- **Financial management:** Manage budgets and identify opportunities for sustainable funding and co-investment.
 - **People leadership:** a track record of building high-performing teams, creating accountability and developing people.
 - **Cross-cultural agility:** the ability to work effectively across different European countries, institutions, professional cultures and perspectives.

Fluency in English is essential, additional European languages are an advantage.

WHY JOIN EIT WATER?

If you are energised by the opportunity to turn strategy into innovation, connect ecosystems across Europe and accelerate the adoption and scale of solutions that address critical water challenges, we would like to hear from you.