



InnoNext Best Practice Guidelines



Table of Content

1. Objectives.....	2
1.1 The objectives of InnoNext	2
1.2 Objectives of the Guidelines.....	3
2. The Parties	4
2.1 InnoNext Consortium.....	4
2.2. Visiting Talent.....	4
2.3 Hosting Company.....	5
3. Commitments of the Parties.....	5
3.1 InnoNext Consortium commitments.....	5
3.2 Hosting Company Commitments	7
3.3 Visiting Talent Engagements	8
4. Causes of suspension and/or termination of the internship	10
5. Conflicts and crisis management.....	10

1. Objectives

1.1 The objectives of InnoNext

InnoNext is a flagship initiative of the European Innovation Council (EIC), designed to foster collaboration between Europe's top academic talents and innovative start-ups and SMEs. By leveraging fully funded internships, we bridge the gap between research and enterprise, driving impactful innovation and strengthening the European innovation ecosystem.

We go beyond traditional internship programs by applying a human-centered approach and focusing on tailored matches that align with the specific needs of companies and talents, providing a platform that connects deep-tech talents and aspiring innovators with entrepreneurs, start-ups, and SMEs collaborating through Innovation Internships.

We support innovators like you with two main streams of action:

- Deep Tech Talents - Research-Focused Internships: Talents collaborate on cutting-edge projects, addressing technological challenges and advancing research applications in the European entrepreneurial ecosystem.



- Aspiring Innovators - Entrepreneurship-focused Internships: Innovators gain hands-on business experience and entrepreneurial skills while contributing to real-world solutions.

Internships last between 3 and 6 months and are fully funded by the respective EU Programmes or InnoNext, ensuring no financial burden for hosting companies.

The Objectives

- Increase competitiveness: Provide innovative start-ups and SMEs with access to cutting-edge research ideas and insights, thus accelerating the development of innovative products and services.
- Encourage entrepreneurship: Develop an entrepreneurial mindset by enabling researchers and aspiring innovators to gain practical experience and understanding of the processes needed to take research ideas to the next level.
- Facilitate knowledge transfer: Mobilize individuals with specific skills, knowledge and abilities developed in EU excellence Programmes within innovative startups and SMEs.
- Promote equal opportunities: Improved and equal access to research talent: Innovative startups and SMEs supported by EU-funded Programmes will have better access to research talent, which could lead to more innovative products and services.

InnoNext reinterprets the internship as a transformative partnership that unites high-level talents with visionary deep-tech start-ups and companies to redefine the future of science, technology, and progress. entrepreneurs, start-ups and SMEs collaborating through Innovation Internships.

InnoNext internships are designed to bring innovation beyond invention and grow the entrepreneurial mind-set.

1.2 Objectives of the Guidelines

The InnoNext Guidelines have been developed in order to make the innovation internship experience an enriching and positive experience for both VISITING TALENTS and HOSTING COMPANIES.

The Guidelines are, therefore, to be considered an integral and substantial part of the internship agreements and related financial agreements.

In the document, the roles of the main actors are made explicit and regulated, in addition to what is already provided for in the agreement templates:

- Causes for suspension and interruption of internship;
- Conflict and crisis management.



These Guidelines are drafted in compliance with the quality criteria provided by the European programmes participating in the initiative, in order to guarantee high quality standards of the experience.

2. The Parties

2.1 InnoNext Consortium

The InnoNext Consortium, composed of Links Foundation, Réseau Entreprendre Piemonte and Zucchetti, acts as the facilitator of the initiative.

It intervenes, at all stages of the process, to support both Visiting Talent and Hosting Companies in the following actions: application, uploading documents for eligibility, creating vacancies, providing the agreements' templates needed to activate the internships, manages payments for FSTP beneficiaries.

The InnoNext Consortium also intervenes, as well, in all cases of dispute and crisis management as regulated in the following paragraphs.

The Consortium will, also, take care of the additional activities related to the innovation internship:

- organizing workshops aimed at Visiting Talent and Hosting Companies as part of InnoNext Workshops, a hub of insights and experience sharing aimed at the InnoNext community;
- monitoring and measuring the effectiveness of the initiative through the administration of questionnaires, surveys, assessment, etc.

2.2. Visiting Talent

InnoNext is open for:

Talents:

- EIC Pathfinder PhD candidates
- EIC Pathfinder Postdoctoral researchers
- EIC Transition researchers
- Students or graduates from EIT Label Master's or Doctoral programmes
- EIT Alumni members
- Researchers from other postdoctoral training programmes funded by the EIT Community
- Other KICs education programmes
- PhD and/or postdoctoral researchers participating in projects funded by the European Research Council (ERC)



- Fellows participating in Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) Postdoctoral Fellowships
- Fellows participating Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) Doctoral Networks
- Fellows participating Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) COFUND
- PHD and/or postdoctoral researcher participating as a consortium member in a project funded by the Research Infrastructures part of Horizon Europe

2.3 Hosting Company

InnoNext is open for:

Hosting Companies:

- Start-ups and SMEs supported by the EIC Accelerator (including H2020 SME instrument)
- EIC awarded Seal of Excellence companies
- SMEs/start-ups supported by EIC Transition
- SMEs/start-ups supported by EIC Pathfinder
- Startups and SMEs supported by the EIT Community and its business creation services
- Businesses founded with support from Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs)
- Companies that have partnered with KICs for innovation activities
- Startups or scale-ups with at least one co-founder who is an EIT Alumni member

3. Commitments of the Parties

3.1 InnoNext Consortium commitments

In the framework of the Initiative, the InnoNext Consortium undertakes to implement the following activities:

1) Support activities for VISITING TALENTS and HOSTING COMPANY throughout the process, from the registration phase to the finalization phase of the matchmaking, in particular:

- a. support in the compilation of the Letter of Commitment for the HOSTING COMPANY;
- b. support in the compilation of the Declaration of Honor for the VISITING TALENT;
- c. support in the realization and compilation of the vacancy by the HOSTING COMPANY to be published on the dedicated page of the portal, with suggestions on how to orient the proposal;



- d. support in the choice of vacancy to be proposed so that they respond to the questions of specific candidates, from the point of view of the subject of the internship, also through the use of Artificial Intelligence;
- e. reminder for the upload of the required documentation to the parties, in order to facilitate the closure of the process within the established deadlines, aimed at the signing of an internship agreement;
- f. collection of feedback from the VISITING TALENT and the HOSTING COMPANY regarding the matchmaking process and then regarding the progress of the internship;
- g. support in the matchmaking activity and, if necessary, in the organization of meetings between the HOSTING COMPANY and the VISITING TALENT to verify the actual interest and usefulness of the internship;
- h. supervision in the process of signature of all the agreement documentation by the two parties;
- i. support in the process of restarting the search path in case the VISITING TALENT is not selected by the HOSTING COMPANY for which he/she had applied;
- j. support during the internship period as facilitators of the moments of dialogue and exchange between HOSTING COMPANY and VISITING TALENT, when requested by one or both parties;
- k. support in case of conflict between HOSTING COMPANY and VISITING TALENT, in order to find an amicable settlement of the same and allow the continuation of the Internship until its expiration with an effective benefit for both parties;
- l. collection, through surveys, of the feedbacks of HOSTING COMPANY and VISITING TALENT during and at the end of the internship.

In order to be able to carry out the activities referred to in the present point 1), the InnoNext Consortium will provide dedicated staff, who can be contacted directly at the following addresses:

companies@innonext-project.eu

talents@innonext-project.eu

2) The InnoNext Consortium, in addition to the activity of facilitator in the matchmaking process between VISITING TALENT and HOSTING COMPANY, will provide in-depth workshops divided by themes, in order to provide also a mentoring support to all participants in the Initiative (Workshop InnoNext).



3.2 Hosting Company Commitments

In the registration phase on the portal of the initiative, in order to allow a smooth and correct matchmaking procedure aimed at the realization of value-added internships, the HOSTING COMPANY undertakes:

- (i) to sign the Letter of Commitment and to send it duly filled in and signed in compliance with the indicated deadlines;
- (ii) to draft and upload a vacancy, in compliance with the guidelines, available at the following link <https://innonext-project.eu/en/resources> and with the indicated deadlines.

In the framework of the initiative, the HOSTING COMPANY undertakes, in particular, to carry out the following activities in order to provide the best possible experience to VISITING TALENT:

- 1) within its structure, it identifies a person (tutor), with adequate preparation at least on the English language, to act as a contact person for both the VISITING TALENT and the InnoNext Consortium throughout the Internship, providing assistance even if conflicts should arise between the parties;
- 2) in order to allow the best possible offer to the VISITING TALENT, for the finalization of the registration to the portal, it will draw up a detailed vacancy, in accordance with the guidelines made available in the following link: <https://innonext-project.eu/en/resources> ;
- 3) during the implementation of the Innovation Internship program, ensures that the experience of the VISITING TALENT is of high quality and innovative, and that it actually enables the practical application of the scientific background of which the Visiting Talent is bearer;
- 4) in the preliminary phase with respect to the internship, fills in accurately and sends in a timely manner the required documentation (Letter of commitment);
- 5) during the signing of the internship agreement, together with the VISITING TALENT, defines the performance objectives, so that they are clear and shared and reflect the specialized scientific training of the VISITING TALENT;
- 6) before the actual start of the internship, defines, together with the VISITING TALENT, in accordance with the program already published on the portal, the operational steps that will allow the achievement of the objectives set during the signing of the internship agreement;
- 7) during the internship, draws up a progress report, documenting the collaboration process carried out and which can also be used as feedback to be provided to the InnoNext Consortium in case of request;



- 8) during the Internship, introduces the VISITING TALENT into the company's business activity, by including him/her in the work team and providing him/her with the equipment he/she needs;
- 9) during the Internship, monitors the activities carried out by the VISITING TALENT and periodically review them in order to identify possible complexities to be solved together;
- 10) during the Internship, takes part in the training initiatives promoted within the InnoNext Workshop, involving both HOSTING COMPANY and VISITING TALENT;
- 11) at the end of the Internship, taking into account the documentation concerning the progresses made during the relationship, draws up a final report reflecting the path carried out and the objectives achieved.

In order to enable the VISITING TALENT to have a proper work experience, respectful of the European standards for the protection of workers, the HOSTING COMPANY:

- A) will comply with what is indicated at European level on the treatment of workers in full respect of current legislation and good practice on the subject, as indicated in the agreement documentation signed;
- B) will take all necessary and appropriate safety measures in order to protect the health and safety of the VISITING TALENT, taking responsibility for carrying out due assessments of the risks, even if only potential, to which the VISITING TALENT could be exposed during his/her stay with the HOSTING COMPANY;
- C) shall endeavor to provide all the necessary specific training to the VISITING TALENT, in relation to the specific risks related to the operational activities to be carried out during the Internship, in particular where this requires access to restricted areas in the company.

3.3 Visiting Talent Engagements

In the registration phase on the Initiative portal, in order to allow a smooth and correct matchmaking procedure aimed at the realization of effective Internships, the VISITING TALENT undertakes:

- (i) to complete, sign and send the required pre-agreement documentation (Declaration of Honor or EIT Certificate or Engagement Letter for verification of eligibility requirements) within the terms indicated, taking advantage if deemed useful of the support of the dedicated InnoNext Team, available at the following e-mail address talents@innonext-project.eu;



(ii) to read carefully the individual vacancy posted, in order to verify that the subject matter of the one or those selected to send one's application actually reflects one's scientific background;

In the matchmaking phase, in order to enable the finalization and start of the Internship, as well as then during the Internship in order to facilitate the collaboration, the VISITING TALENT undertakes:

- 1) at the agreement signing stage, to a joint definition with the HOSTING COMPANY of the performance objectives to be achieved during the Internship in order to include them in the training plan signed by both parties;
- 2) during the Internship, to follow the jointly drafted program in order to achieve the previously agreed objectives, through the performance of the agreed activities;
- 3) during the Internship, to closely follow the activities carried out by the HOSTING COMPANY, in a proactive manner aimed at understanding the dynamics of practical application of the scientific research carried out by him/her;
- 4) during the Internship, to maintain a professional and competent attitude, reflecting the level of complexity required by the activities he/she will have to perform, as well as to comply in addition to current regulations, with all company regulations related to the protection of workers' health, particularly where the Internship requires access to sensitive areas or the performance of high-risk activities;
- 5) during the Internship, to maintain a constant relationship with the tutor that the HOSTING COMPANY will entrust to him/her, through the establishment of at least one monthly alignment meeting (possibly with the involvement of an InnoNext Consortium representative where requested by the VISITING TALENT or the HOSTING COMPANY), also in order to facilitate the drafting of the documentation to the progresses of the internship (such as the timesheet and the final report) and if necessary in order to make revisions or additions to the agreed collaboration plan;
- 6) during the Internship, to complete and send to the InnoNext Consortium, in addition to timesheets where required, surveys or other questionnaires that will be sent to him/her, necessary to allow monitoring of the quality of the Initiative;
- 7) during the Internship, compatibly with the activities to be carried out and in agreement with his or her company tutor, to participate in the training initiatives promoted within the InnoNext Workshop, involving VISITING TALENT and HOSTING COMPANY;
- 8) at the end of the Internship, send to InnoNext, in addition to the final report reflecting the achievement of the goals set in the program initially signed between



the parties, also the self-assessment in compliance with the template sent by InnoNext.

4. Causes of suspension and/or termination of the internship

In addition to the causes of default stated in the internship agreement and the financial agreement, which could result in the early termination of the internship, and in addition to the causes provided for by applicable law, the internship may be suspended or prematurely terminated where the following circumstances exist:

- work commitment of the VISITING TALENT imposed by the home research organization, already on the schedule prior to the start of the internship and made known to the HOSTING COMPANY prior to the start of the internship, which results in the absence of the VISITING TALENT from the HOSTING COMPANY for a period of up to 5 days during the course of the internship. In such a case, the internship will be suspended and the days of absence will be recovered.

5. Conflicts and crisis management

If, during the internship, any disputes arise from the VISITING TALENT towards the HOSTING COMPANY or vice versa, the parties should first attempt to reach an amicable resolution of the matter, in order to avoid the emergence of a conflict.

If it is the VISITING TALENT, who has claims, he/she should first contact his/her company tutor; if this is not sufficient, he/she may send an e-mail to the InnoNext Consortium contact, that will be provided to him/her at the beginning of the internship, stating the issue.

InnoNext, at this point, will contact the HOSTING COMPANY tutor and schedule a meeting (which can also be held remotely), to be held within 15 days of receiving the communication, inviting both the VISITING TALENT and the HOSTING COMPANY to participate.

During this first phase of dialogue, there will be no suspension of the parties' obligations, including payment obligations (for VISITING TALENTs that have accessed third-party funding).

If at the first meeting or any subsequent meeting an agreement is reached, which in any way results in a modification of the covenants contained in the internship agreement, a document, signed by VISITING TALENT and HOSTING COMPANY, under the supervision of



the InnoNext Consortium, shall be drawn up and shall be an integral part of the agreement documentation for that specific relationship.

If a solution cannot be reached after the first meeting, an additional meeting may be scheduled, at the discretion of the InnoNext Consortium, at the outcome of which, in the absence of agreement between the parties, each may decide, if necessary, to terminate the internship, or to take legal action to protect its interests, in accordance with the terms of the internship agreement.

