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Impact Assessment and Feedback from EC

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Deliverable abstract	<p>The present deliverable describes the conceiving and the achieving of the Impact Assessment Plan (D4.3), which outlines the methodology, tools, and evaluation strategy used to assess the interim and final impacts of the project, with a particular focus on WP2 and WP3 activities. It provides an overview of the continuous assessment activities conducted within the InnoNext initiative and incorporates feedback from the EU Commission as part of a dynamic process of improvement and alignment with project goals.</p> <p>The deliverable describes the methodology applied to the impact assessment, including the tools used for data collection and analysis and the indicators monitored. The deliverable will be updated every three months. The current document is the first release planned for the M9. The further updates are foreseen at M12, M15, M18, M21, and M24.</p>
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¹ Dissemination level: **PU** = Public, **PP** = Restricted to other programme participants (including the JU), **RE** = Restricted to a group specified by the consortium, **CO** = Confidential, only for members of the consortium

² Nature of the deliverable: **R** = Report, **P** = Prototype, **D** = Demonstrator, **O** = Other

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Acronym List

EIC	European Innovation Council
EIT	European Institute of Innovation & Technology
ERC	European Research Council
EU PP	European Partner Programme
HC	Hosting Company
HE	Horizon Europe
IN	InnoNext
MSCA	Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions
PO	Project Officer
VT	Visiting Talent
RIs	Research Infrastructures





Executive summary

This document represents the first release of Deliverable D4.3 “Impact Assessment and Feedback”, dedicated to evaluating the impact of the InnoNext initiative. Its structure is designed to support iterative updates every three months, in line with the project's development and in response to feedback gathered from beneficiaries and stakeholders. This dynamic approach enables continuous tracking of the initiative’s effectiveness, supporting improvement actions and ongoing learning.

It is structured around the **four specific objectives** identified during the proposal phase. This structure allows for a direct alignment between the monitoring indicators (KPIs), the expected outcomes, and the overarching project impacts, facilitating the traceability of results and the timely adaptation of strategies. For each objective, data collected, actions taken, and tools used to ensure effective implementation are presented.

The impact assessment is based on a Theory of Change methodology (see section 2.3) and integrates both quantitative tools (platform, dashboard, surveys) and qualitative approaches (1-to-1 feedback, mentoring, workshops). The data and analyses provided in this first release form the basis for a progressive narrative of the project, supporting both the consortium and EU Partner Programmes involved in the process.

In the following table, an overview of the main changes on the document:

Version	Month Delivery	Main Changes
V01	M9	First delivery of the document; Methodology framework; Tools and methods for data collection; Overview on the achievement of the KPIs related to the specific Objectives; Next Steps
V02	M12	Update of the data collected on the V01 (Obj1; Obj2; Obj4); Consistent overview on Data related to the achievement of the Obj3 KPIs; update of the Next Steps



1. Introduction

1.1. InnoNext overview

InnoNext is an initiative funded under the call HORIZON-EIC-2023-TALENTS-01-01 "Next Generation Innovation Talents", aiming to cultivate an entrepreneurial mindset by creating collaboration opportunities for talented researchers and innovators to work with startups operating in their areas of expertise, across the EU with the support of the extensive network of EIC and various European Partner Programmes.

InnoNext scheme includes 2 open calls dedicated to aspiring Visiting Talents and Hosting Companies to collaborate through an Innovation Internship. The calls for interests, which will remain open for the whole duration of the project until 2026, facilitate a tailored matching process. Moreover, InnoNext offers different resources to connect beneficiaries and support them during the internship, including a comprehensive mentoring and acceleration plan. InnoNext aims to activate 600 internships involving multiple beneficiaries (Table 1).

Table 1 - InnoNext beneficiaries

Visiting Talents	Hosting Companies
<p>Including PhD candidates, and postdoctoral researchers participating in projects funded by the following EU Partner Programmes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EIC Pathfinder and Transition • ERC • MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships • MSCA Doctoral Networks • MSCA COFUND • Research Infrastructures <p>Students or graduates from EIT Label Master's or Doctoral programmes EIT Alumni members Participants from other postdoctoral training programmes supported by the EIT Community</p>	<p>Including startups and SMEs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supported by EIC Accelerator • Supported by EIC Transition • Supported by EIC Pathfinder • Awarded by EIC Seal of Excellence • Supported by EIT Community and its business creation services • Created as a result of / receiving support from Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) • Partnered with KICs for innovation activities • With at least one co-founder who is an EIT Alumni member • Supported by MSCA

The InnoNext scheme is structured in six sequential phases (Figure 1) and the following distinctive pillars:

- The **collaboration with the EU Partner Programmes**, which has been involved since the beginning in the call design and during the process through the integrated communication and dissemination of the calls to the potential beneficiaries, as well as the eligibility and monitoring criteria.
- Two **Application calls** dedicated to Visiting Talents and Hosting Companies. The calls, largely disseminated thanks to Research and Innovation European Programmes support, will remain open for 18 months. During this period, the continuous monitoring of the process and



feedback of beneficiaries and stakeholders might result in the call updates, handled in 5 releases.

- A **dedicated platform** that facilitates the Hosting Companies in creating internship vacancies and allows Visiting Researchers to apply for them throughout a well-driven and easy process, supported by dedicated guides and indications. The service includes mechanisms to keep the registered users informed about all the opportunities and suggestions resulting from the matchmaking, the internship activation steps and the mentoring activities, making the whole process understandable and transparent.
- A **hybrid matchmaking process** based on an AI-based algorithm processing the needs and ambitions of the applicants will propose ranked shortlists of opportunities. Shaped and supervised by experts, the whole process will guarantee equal access⁴ to opportunities for the applicants.

A comprehensive mentorship plan to offer and share knowledge and tailored support to nurture the entrepreneurship potential of participants. Background and skills such as innovation management, teamwork, and internal communication will be deepened in experiential workshops for Talent and Enterprises. These activities will be planned based on direct feedback collected from the beneficiaries, allowing to improve and refine the InnoNext initiative schema continuously.

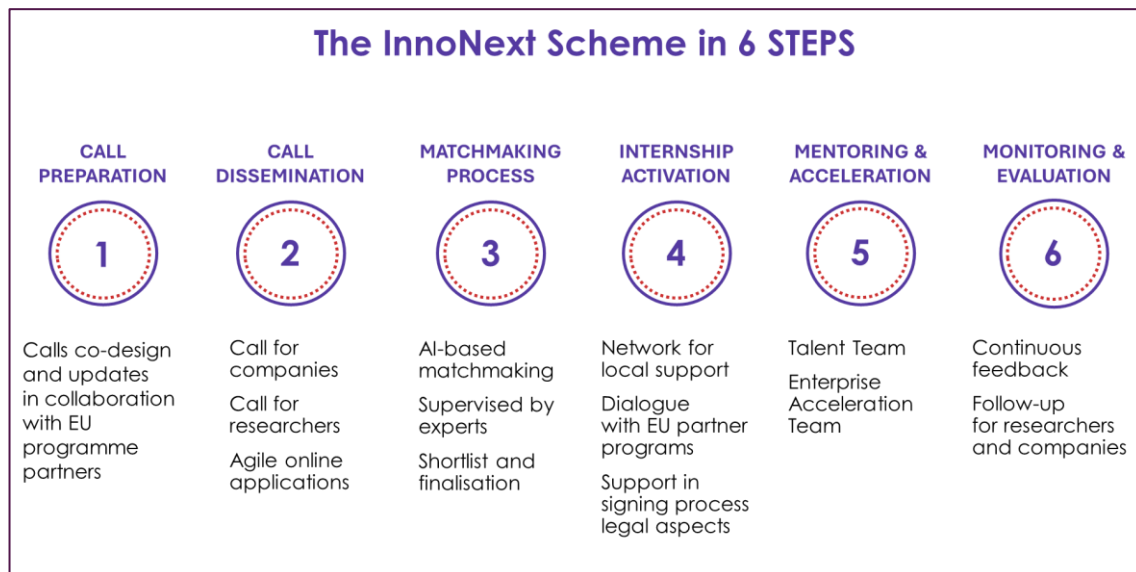


Figure 1 – The InnoNext schema

1.2. Purpose of the Document

This document provides a comprehensive overview of the InnoNext Impact Assessment Activity, detailing its methodological approach, data collection strategy, evaluation indicators, and reporting templates. The document will undergo iterative updates to reflect ongoing learning and refinement throughout the implementation of the initiative.

⁴ Criteria of fairness and impartiality will be consistently and transparently applied uniformly to the whole process. Every application will have the same opportunities, resources, and consideration without favouritism, discrimination, or any barriers that could disadvantage individuals or groups,



The objective of this document is to present the Impact Assessment by outlining the key evaluation components developed by the InnoNext team and informed by the experiences and feedback of beneficiaries and stakeholders.

This continuous feedback loop **supports the dynamic evolution of the assessment strategy**, ensuring it remains relevant, evidence-based, and capable of capturing **both expected and emergent impacts**. The iterative nature of the document facilitates the tracking of changes, insights, and challenges, contributing to a shared roadmap for evaluating the effectiveness and long-term value of the InnoNext Initiative.



2. Impact Assessment Overview

2.1. Relation to other WPs

The Impact Assessment document provides a cross-cutting overview of the project's various Work Packages (WPs), with particular focus on WP1, dedicated to defining the framework and the InnoNext Scheme; WP2, focused on structuring the technological infrastructure; WP3, concerning the actual implementation of the InnoNext Scheme and its continuous iteration; and WP4, centered on communication and dissemination activities for the Initiative. The project's effectiveness and its potential to generate impact are closely tied to a balanced and coordinated management by the Consortium, which falls under WP5. Although WP5 is not addressed in this document, it significantly influences the project.

2.2. Evolution of the document

The document is designed as an interactive and evolving tool, to be progressively updated to track the project's development in terms of outputs and expected impacts. It will include in its final version the results of both the interim and final impact assessments, incorporating feedback from the European Commission.

It details the methodology applied, the tools used, the outcomes achieved, and the recommended actions to support ongoing integration and improvement, particularly within WP2 and WP3 (as outlined in T4.3 and T4.4).

The document will be **updated every three months**, with the first release scheduled for M9, followed by updates at M12, M15, M18, M21, and M24.

This first version is structured to enable the tracking of progress and trends within the InnoNext initiative and to support the development of a final report that provides a narrative overview of the project's evolution and helps identify the impact generated step by step.

2.3. Methodology

The Theory of Change (ToC) is a methodology originally developed in the field of international development to support planning, evaluation, and communication of **complex interventions**. It emerged in the 1990s as a response to the need for more transparent and participatory approaches to programme design, especially **in contexts where change depends on multiple actors and conditions**. At its core, ToC helps organizations map out the pathway from their actions to the desired long-term change, explicitly identifying intermediate outcomes, underlying assumptions, and external factors that can influence success.

By breaking down the process into a logical sequence of inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes, the ToC helps clarify how each component of the project contributes to its overarching goals.



In the Theory of Change framework, **outputs**, **outcomes**, and **impacts** represent different levels of results that together describe the pathway of change. **Outputs** are the direct products or services delivered through project activities, for example, training sessions held, or tools developed. **Outcomes** are the short- to medium-term changes resulting from the use of these outputs, such as increased knowledge, changed behaviors, or improved collaboration among stakeholders. **Impacts** refer to the broader, long-term changes that occur at a systemic or societal level, such as enhanced innovation capacity, reduced inequalities, or stronger research ecosystems. This layered structure helps track how concrete actions lead to meaningful, lasting transformation.

The expected impacts and outcomes of the InnoNext project were defined using the ToC methodology, which enabled the Consortium to identify the methods and practices needed to **map the pathway of change** the initiative aims to foster among its beneficiaries. Building on the foundations laid out in the project proposal, a coherent monitoring and evaluation plan was developed to collect the necessary information and track progress towards the achievement of KPIs.

InnoNext is an iterative initiative that requires constant and careful data collection to effectively steer strategic decisions and support the achievement of its intended impacts. Through bi-weekly meetings, the InnoNext Consortium monitors the overall progress of the various work packages (WPs) in relation to the expected impacts, allowing for the timely identification of actions to address project challenges that emerge from an increasingly deep understanding of the ecosystem in which the initiative operates.

In this context, the Theory of Change serves not only as a methodological tool but also as a strategic approach that enables the Consortium to maintain a **shared and dynamic vision of the objectives**, fostering a culture of continuous learning and adaptability. This approach is especially relevant in a constantly evolving environment, where the ability to critically reflect on ongoing change and to realign project actions accordingly is essential to maximise the relevance and effectiveness of the intervention.

A visual representation of the expected outputs, outcomes, and impacts of the InnoNext project is presented below.



Output (Objectives)	(Expected) Outcomes	Impact
<p>O1 - The InnoNext Scheme: innovative internship scheme to boost entrepreneurship through a competency-based talent methodology</p> <p>O2 - Perform automatic talent discovery and matchmaking with innovative businesses, leveraging top-notch AI algorithms</p> <p>O3 - Support entrepreneurship through internships</p> <p>O4 - Increased visibility of EU funding programmes</p>	<p>EO1 - Support for at least 600 internships</p> <p>EO2 - Replication and upscaling toolkit</p> <p>EO3 - Increased visibility of EU funding programmes</p>	<p>I1 - Develop Entrepreneurial Mindset</p> <p>I2 - Facilitate Knowledge Transfer</p> <p>I3 - Enhanced and Equal Access to Research Talent</p> <p>I4 - Increased Awareness and Knowledge</p>

Figure 2 - InnoNext Output, Outcomes and Impacts



3. Key Events M9 and M12

This document represents the second release of Deliverable 4.3 “Impact Assessment and feedback from EC”, aimed at monitoring and analysing the project's progress from a data analysis perspective during the period between Month 9 (M9) and Month 12 (M12). This document is directly connected to, and should be read as an update of the first version (V01).

To improve readability, the following section highlights the **most relevant events** in the InnoNext initiative that led to notable changes compared to what was reported in V01.

The analysis focuses on the period from the beginning of May 2025 to the end of July 2025. A brief timeline is included below to outline the key events that had significant effects on the flow of InnoNext activities.



Figure 3 - Key Events between M9 and M12

Highlighting these events aims to help in the better understanding of the trends shown in the graphs provided in the following sections.

For a detailed overview of the InnoNext workflow, please refer to Deliverable D3.1-M12.

April 2025 - EIT's Entry into InnoNext

This milestone marked a significant boost in user flow within the platform, particularly from companies and talents associated with the Aspiring Innovators stream.

12th & 19th May - Two InnoNext Info Session Webinars

These webinars served as key communication and engagement tools, attracting over 400 registrants (both companies and talents). They also enabled a valuable Q&A session, helping to clarify practical aspects of the programme.

04th May - First Workshop as Part of the InnoNext Mentoring Activity

The first workshop, part of the Mentoring activity, was delivered online, recorded, and subsequently made available in the Mentoring section of the website. The recorded workshops are accessible only to users who have the password.

15th May - EU Programme Partner Meetings and Release of the New Media Kits

These meetings were crucial for evaluating project progress alongside partner programmes and for identifying areas of improvement. Moreover, new media kits were distributed to partners to support communications and promotion activities.



19th June - Change in the DoH (Declaration of Honour) Collection Timing

This was a pivotal change in user experience. Now, after a talent applies to an opportunity, the company can immediately view their profile without waiting for the DoH to be uploaded. The DoH is now only required once the match is confirmed, ensuring that eligibility is verified before the internship is formally activated. This change has considerably accelerated the matching process (see D3.1-M12 for the InnoNext Scheme; see Objective 1 & Objective 3).

30th June - End of Eligibility for 6-Month Internships for EIT Talents

Due to the requirement that all EIT-related internships must conclude by December 2025, June 30 was the last possible date to activate internships with a six-month duration.



4. Evaluation of objectives

4.1. Objective 1 - The InnoNext Scheme: innovative internship scheme to boost entrepreneurship through a competency-based talent methodology

Objective 1 of the InnoNext Initiative focuses on the implementation of the InnoNext framework, which includes the development of a comprehensive toolkit designed to foster collaboration between the research community and the entrepreneurial sector. The aim is to promote the acquisition and exchange of skills, knowledge, and know-how between these two worlds. Further details on Objective 1 can be found in Deliverable D4.3 – M9.

S	Design a methodology to mobilise individuals with specific skills, knowledge, and competencies developed in the excellence EU programmes to boost the competitiveness of startups while learning by doing an entrepreneurial mindset. This methodology focuses on practical, real-world skills that entrepreneurs can immediately apply to start, grow, and manage their businesses effectively. The methodology will maximise the peculiarities of each EU excellence programme, and it will be provided together with a replication toolkit for its subsequent upscaling.
M	KPI1.1: 1 methodology; KPI1.2: 1 replication and upscaling toolkit;
A	The InnoNext interdisciplinary consortium possesses all the competencies and experience to release a groundbreaking methodology. It will ground on the Researcher Career Development Scheme and on the knowledge and the mentoring practises put in place by RES. This objective is also achieved through the following results: OA1 The InnoNext scheme OA3 Replication and upscaling toolkit
R	The methodology design will involve the project partners, the EU programme representatives, and incubators to maximise the uptake, replicability, and export. This objective contributes to reach the expected outcomes: EO2 Replicability and upscaling , as well as the impacts: I1 Develop Entrepreneurial Mindset, I2 Facilitate Knowledge Transfer, I3 Enhanced and Equal Access to Research Talent, I4 Increased Awareness and Knowledge.
T	Starts at M0 in T1.1 "Needs Consolidation and Scheme Co-Design (with EC)", and ends at M21 in T3.3, "Continuous InnoNext Scheme Improvement".

Below is a summary of the main actions and improvements carried out to refine the InnoNext framework between M9 and M12.

Numerous turning points contributed to a major evolution of the InnoNext framework during this period (as also highlighted in Section 3). A crucial milestone was the co-design and exchange



session with EU Partner Programmes, held during the **Monitoring Meeting on 15th May 2025**. This session involved all EU PPs representatives and Project Officers and served as a valuable benchmark to assess InnoNext's progress, present ongoing activities, and define future steps.

During this meeting, the following were presented:

- An overview of the platform and beneficiary engagement;
- The status of the matching process;
- Developments in tracking systems for beneficiaries;
- Website improvements and the mentoring & tutoring structure;
- Updates to the Agreement Kit;
- Launch of new Media Kits to support communication efforts.

(See Annex 1 – Monitoring Meeting Slide)

Action Performed	Comment	Relevant Output
Co-Design activity and needs collection with EU Programmes	New meetings with the EU Programme Partners	The Co-Design activity is described in D3.1 - The InnoNext Scheme (M12)
Integration of EIT (from April 2025)	EIT's participation was a critical milestone. Since April, regular bi-weekly meetings have been held to actively address challenges and improve engagement with beneficiaries. As EIT's involvement is scheduled until December 2025, continuous dialogue remains essential to maximise outreach and coordination.	EIT integration is described in D3.1 – The InnoNext Scheme (M12)
Declaration of Honour (DoH) submission postponed to match confirmation	This change improved the user experience, it is a relevant simplification of the onboarding procedure and accelerated the matchmaking process, allowing companies to view talent profiles even before the DoH is submitted. The eligibility check now takes place once a match is confirmed. (see Section 4.3.4 in Objective 3)	See D3.1 - The InnoNext Scheme (M12) for the full process
Clearer post-match workflow for companies and talents	Thanks to the first rounds of active matches, it was possible to refine the process and clarify the steps. One example is the labelling system: the "Selected" status (set by the company) now clearly indicates the chosen candidate for a position. The "Hired" status (set by	See D3.1 – InnoNext Scheme for the labels definition



	InnoNext Team) indicates if the Talent complete the Administrative activity and can start the Internship.	
First FSTP activations and internal refinement	The activations enabled testing and optimization of procedures. A dedicated email (administration@innonext-project.eu) was officially introduced for administrative communications and FSTP Management.	See D3.1 – InnoNext Scheme
Updated Agreement Kit	The Agreement Kit was updated to include the <i>InnoNext Best Practices Guidelines</i> – a document outlining the roles and responsibilities of all parties within the framework. Additionally, a declaration was added to the DoH, raising awareness among talents regarding the social tax implications of the financial support received.	See D3.1 – InnoNext Scheme for the update of the Agreement Kit
Aspiring Innovators Stream definition	With the integration of EIT, specific adaptations were made for the "Aspiring Innovators" stream – participants without a formal research contract (e.g., PhD or Postdoc) – including tailored instructions and documents.	See D3.1 – InnoNext Scheme for the update of the Agreement Kit
Launch of the first InnoNext workshops	These were made available in the dedicated <i>Resources</i> section of the website. Tools for feedback collection and participation tracking were also introduced (see Section 4.3.7).	See D3.1 – InnoNext Scheme
Relaunch of Communication	The communication effort was relaunched with the release of the new Media Kits, enabling each Partner Programme to tailor dissemination using their preferred channels.	See D4.2 – Report on Communication and Dissemination Actions
Website improvements	The website has been regularly updated, including enhanced readability and user experience across all pages. Dedicated "Mentoring" Section were also added and improved.	See D4.2 – Report on Communication and Dissemination Actions

Relevant indicators

The indicators listed below are closely linked to the achievement of the following KPIs:

KPI1.1: 1 methodology



KPI1.2: 1 replication and upscaling toolkit

These documents **will be the result of the full implementation of the project**. For this reason, the main components that are progressively developed and will contribute to the finalisation of the methodology and the toolkit are outlined below.

Indicator	M9	M12	M15	M18	M21	M24
Total Meetings with EU PPs	14	26				
Plenary with EU PPs + POs (eg. Monitoring Meeting)	2	1				
Meetings with EIC Pathfinder	3	-				
Meetings with EIC Transition	1	1				
Meetings with EIC SoE	1	-				
Meetings with EIC Accelerator	2	1				
Meetings with EIT	3	9				
Meetings with ERC	1	-				
Meetings with MSCA	2	1				
Meetings with RI	1	-				
HC Call Launch and iteration of the communication	1 (launched on 02/12/2024)					
VT Call Launch and iteration of the communication	1 (launched on 13/12/2024 with a relaunch of communication after the Monitoring Meeting 15/05/2025)					
InnoNext Agreement Kit	1 (periodic upgrade of the Kit thanks to the feedback gathered from EU PPs and beneficiaries)					
Communication and Dissemination Plan	1 (launched on 13/12/2024) Upgrade of the Communication Materials and development of Media Kit for EU PPs (15/07/2025)					



4.2. Objective 2 - Perform automatic matchmaking with innovative businesses, leveraging top-notch AI algorithms

S	Based on the InRecruiting platform brought by ZUC, a significant improvement will be realised to aggregate data from EU RI, enabling talent discovery and providing SMEs and startups an easy way to join the InnoNext scheme, inserting their profile and internship proposals. The platform database will enable the execution of matchmaking, bridging the expertise and willingness of talents with the needs of startups as, expressed within the internship proposal. The platform will also allow the manual browsing and selection of internships, and it will support the entire internship process, including the collection of feedback.
M	<p>KPI2.1: 3000+ number of talents/businesses discovered KPI2.2: perform matches with internships in less than 1 second KPI2.3: $\geq 90\%$ top-5 accuracy of the matches proposed against manually selected options KPI2.4: the time required to join the InnoNext scheme through the platform: <10 min for both talents and companies</p> <p>This objective is also achieved through the following results: KER1 AI-based automatic discovery KER2 AI-based automatic matchmaking KER3 ICT platform to manage open calls and matchmaking for innovators</p>
A	ZUC brings the technology for professional advertisements and career development, resulting in the base platform used in the project. LKS has matured experiences in artificial intelligence technologies. The discovery of candidate matches is implemented at the early stage of the project allowing the use of this technology integrated in the InnoNext platform.
R	This objective addresses the expected outcome EO1 Support for at least 600 Internships, EO2 Replicability and upscaling
T	It is achieved by WP2 "Iterative Technology Implementation" from M4 to M21.

The job matching system has developed since the last iteration as indicated in Deliverable D2.1. Here we will summarize some of its conclusions.

Initially, the job matching system included only the results of the **JM algorithm** based on the match between the data contained in the CV of the talent and the text of the vacancy.

The JM system is a hybrid system based on semantic similarity between texts and matching between extracted 'skill' information from both text of the CV and the text of the vacancy. The initial estimates of the recall (ability to identify top candidates out of a larger set) was promising with mean reciprocal rank [MRR] score of 0.78 and Top-5 accuracy of 80%.

The test on real world data has given weaker results: in the first 40 matches of InnoNext is the MRR=0.34 and the Top-5 probability is 55%.



Although it's possible to say that at least the system can guarantee that 90% of the time the eventually chosen candidate is in the Top-10, therefore a suitable candidate almost always appears to the user on the first page during their search.

InnoNext Consortium have identified the potential biggest weaknesses of the original algorithm and are implementing changes to improve the job matching accuracy: the plan is to assign more weight to the semantic component to stress the idea of transferable skills (please see the Deliverable 2.1 M12 for relevant discussion and plots).

Currently, the job matching system is also augmented by the contribution from a second algorithm, the so-called **Competency based Matching [CBM]**. When there is information present in the ORCID system about the candidates' published research outputs, and the research output topic matches the topics mentioned in the vacancy, additional points are assigned to the talent vis-a-vis the specific vacancy. This is a new feature since M6. Unfortunately, currently due to the nature of talents that have initiated an internship, the Consortium does not have enough data to validate this evolution.

Given the fact that the InnoNext Platform has a functioning matching system, it is possible to leverage its output also on the candidates that are in the InnoNext database but have not registered for a particular vacancy.

To answer this issue, the Consortium performs a simple but informative exercise: the team asks what is the **top-3 score for a candidate** who has not registered for a given vacancy but is in the database.

If such score is high, and the consortium is reasonably confident that this indicates a good match, i.e. this event indicates a missed opportunity to make a successful match (a high score is close to 1.0). The Consortium focuses on the vacancies that have 4 or less registrations (48 at the time of writing, July 2025), i.e. vacancies considered under-applied by the Consortium; this sample is called 'simple'. To avoid a possible complication that a talent might already have applied elsewhere, it's been performed another exercise in which the Consortium only look at the matches between talents that have not registered for any vacancies and these under-applied vacancies; this sample is called 'strict'.

The InnoNext Team chose to track the top-3 score (the score of third highest ranked unregistered candidate) because the top score is sensitive to spurious matches and misjudges by the algorithm. Instead, a high top-3 score indicates that there are at least three candidates with such a score.

Below is the distribution of top-3 scores:

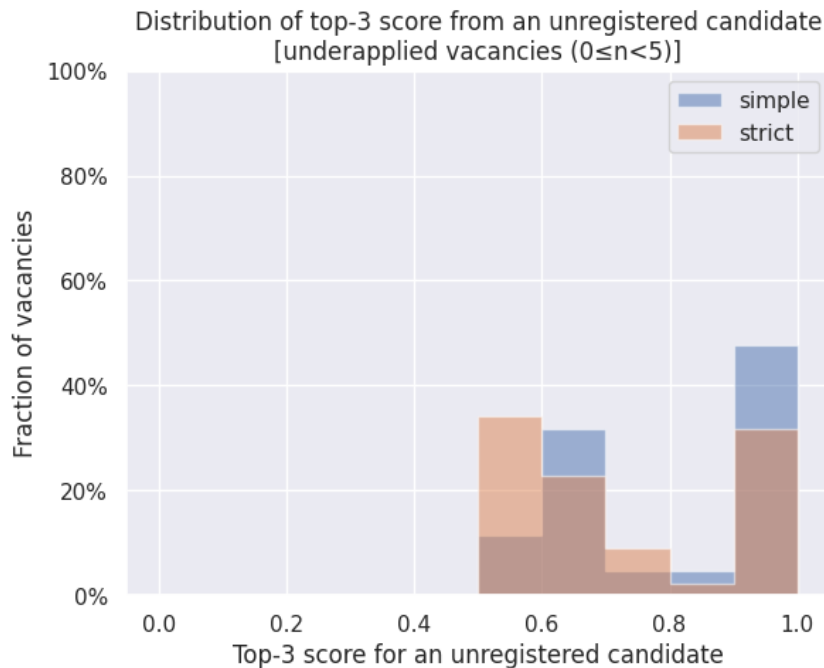


Figure 4 - The distribution of maximum score of an unregistered candidate: 1 implies a good match, lower scores imply a weaker match.

From Figure 4 it is possible to see that if we believe that the matching score can be trusted (for which there is some evidence in deliverable D2.1 M12, we could improve our results by using these suggestions. In particular, this implies that somewhere around 20 vacancies, are likely to have a suitable but unregistered candidate. Furthermore, the expected happens: when we limit ourselves to the strict sample, the fraction of vacancies with a clear set of matching candidates is lower.

To close this gap and to address the challenge of under-applied vacancies and improve overall engagement, we have developed and recently tested a Position Alert System designed to proactively recommend opportunities to talents. This system builds on the insights from the previous analysis of top-3 scores, which revealed that many under-applied vacancies could potentially have strong matches among talents who had not registered for them. By operationalizing these findings, the alert system helps reduce such missed opportunities.

The mechanism relies on the output of the Competency-based Matching (CBM) algorithm, which uses research outputs published by talents (retrieved via ORCID) and performs a semantic similarity comparison against internship position descriptions. For each talent, the system identifies the top five most relevant positions based on this matching score and sends automated email notifications highlighting these opportunities.

The goal of this feature is twofold: first, to help talents discover newly published positions that best align with their competences, and second, to re-engage participants who may have forgotten about the InnoNext programme or are not actively searching for roles. By delivering personalized recommendations directly to talents' inboxes, this feature reduces missed matches, particularly



for vacancies with few applications, and ensures a better distribution of candidates across available roles.

Relevant indicators

Indicator	M9
KPI2.1 - Number of talents/businesses discovered	523 total users*
KPI2.2 - Time required to perform matches with internships (on average)	0.5ms
KPI2.3 - Top-5 accuracy of the matches proposed	n/a**
KPI2.4 - Time required to join the InnoNext scheme through the platform	less than 10 min***

* Data at 01/08/2025

** At this stage, it is not yet possible to assess the accuracy of the matchmaking system, as we currently lack a real ground truth (i.e., activated internships) that would allow us to perform a reliable evaluation of the matching outcomes based on a combination of both algorithms.

*** The registration phase, which formalizes the participation of either VTs or HCs in the initiative, has been designed to be efficient and user-friendly. The entire process takes less than 10 minutes to complete. Forms and procedures have been carefully structured to collect participant data swiftly and effectively, minimizing any potential barriers to entry.



4.3. Objective 3 - Support entrepreneurship through internships

Objective 3 is closely linked to **Objective 1** and is crosscutting across all WPs, as the implementation of the InnoNext Scheme is instrumental in reaching the targeted number of beneficiaries. Specifically, this objective focuses on monitoring the progress of internships and evaluating their impact on participants.

Objective 3 aims to ensure the effective achievement of the project's target, as defined in the proposal phase: the reach of **600 internships over 2 years**.

S	Allow eligible researchers (PhD candidates, postdoctoral researchers, and relevant students) to undertake innovation internships in hosting companies, fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange.
M	KPI3.1: 600+ internships in 2 years KPI3.2: 150+ interns from EIC Pathfinder KPI3.3: 300+ deep tech internships KPI3.4: 300+ aspiring innovator internships KPI3.5: ≥50% of the InnoNext budget allocated to support internships KPI3.6: Intern Satisfaction (on a Likert scale) at least 75% express 4 out of 5 KPI3.7: Company Satisfaction (on a Likert scale) at least 75% express 4 out of 5
A	Companies are subsidised to welcome highly qualified talents. The best match from what companies need and what talents can offer grants paves the way for a successful collaboration between talents and companies.
R	This objective addresses the expected outcome: EO1 Support for at least 600 Internships, EO3 Increased visibility of EU funding programmes , and contributes to all impacts (I1, I2, I3, I4)
T	It is achieved by WP3 "Iterative Scheme Implementation" from M4 to M21.

The InnoNext Team is conducting comprehensive data analysis based on the information collected through various tracking systems (Platform, Dashboard, Survey, Mailing, Success Stories, etc.). A dedicated report is being developed to monitor participant trends and identify actions to ensure effective engagement of the target groups.

At M12 one of the main objectives is to capitalize on the existing pool of participants and define the next strategic steps to enhance the overall scheme.



Between **Month 9 (M9)** and **Month 12 (M12)**, a series of strategic actions were implemented and aligned with key events that triggered significant growth within InnoNext, all recorded in just three months.

The following section is an overview of beneficiaries' engagement on the platform, highlighting the key factors linked to this rapid expansion.

As of now, **510 talents and 216 companies** have registered on the platform, marking substantial growth compared to the numbers recorded at M9.

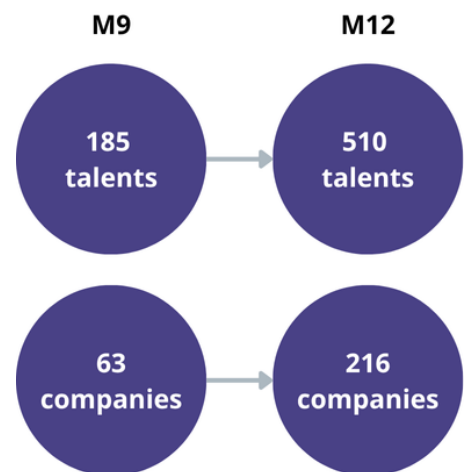


Figure 5 - Number on the Platform (Data source: InnoNext Platform, July 2025)

Currently, **141 Innovation Internship opportunities** are published, of which 99 are aligned with the DeepTech stream and 42 are part of the Aspiring Innovators stream.

At present, **44 matches have been confirmed** and are now progressing into Innovation Internships through the process defined by the InnoNext Agreement Kit.

Activated Internships



Figure 6 - Activated Internship (Data source: InnoNext Platform, July 2025)

Figure 7 - Open Opportunities (Data source: InnoNext Platform, July 2025)



4.3.1 Visiting Talents

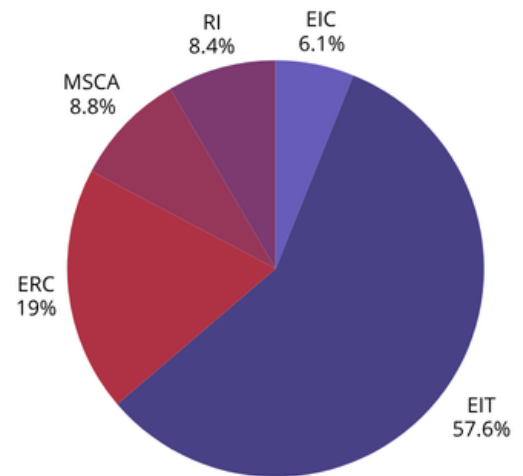
The Following section gives an overview on the achievement of the following KPIs.

KPI Monitoring	KPI3.1: 600+ internships in 2 years KPI3.2: 150+ interns from EIC Pathfinder
-----------------------	---

The growth of talents between M9 and M12 has been remarkable, particularly in terms of the distribution across different funding programmes.

Table 2 - Visiting Talents Signed on InnoNext (Data source: InnoNext Platform, July 2025)

Indicator	M9	M12
Visiting Talents Signed on InnoNext		
Visiting Talents	185	510
EIC	17**	31
EIT	41	294
ERC	86	97
MSCA	33	45
RI	8	43



The increase in **EIC beneficiaries has been steady, partly due to the inclusion of PhD and PostDoc researchers working on EIC Transition projects, who are eligible to join InnoNext as Visiting Talents.

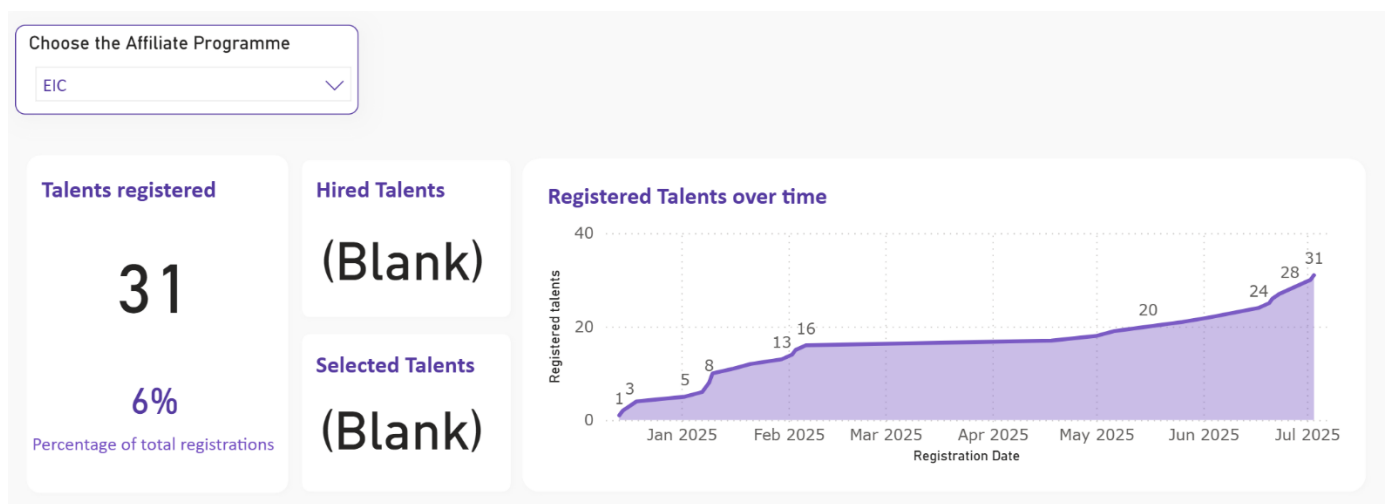
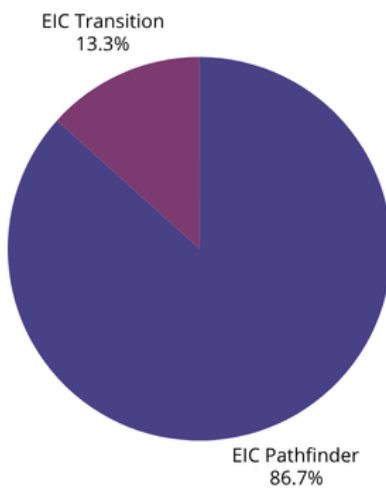


Figure 8 – EIC Registered Talents over time (Data source: InnoNext Platform, July 2025)



The integration of researchers involved in projects funded by the EIC Transition programme was introduced in May 2025, following the interest expressed during the EIC Summit 2025. The graph on the left shows the distribution of users registered on the platform coming from the two main EIC programme pathways.

Additionally, in May, new Media Kits were shared with EU programmes to support the relaunch of communication activities through official channels. In particular, different contents versions were included for dissemination via email and other channels (see D.4.2 – Report on Communication and Dissemination Actions).

Figure 9 - EIC Visiting Talents on the Platform (Data source: InnoNext Platform, July 2025)

EIT Beneficiaries

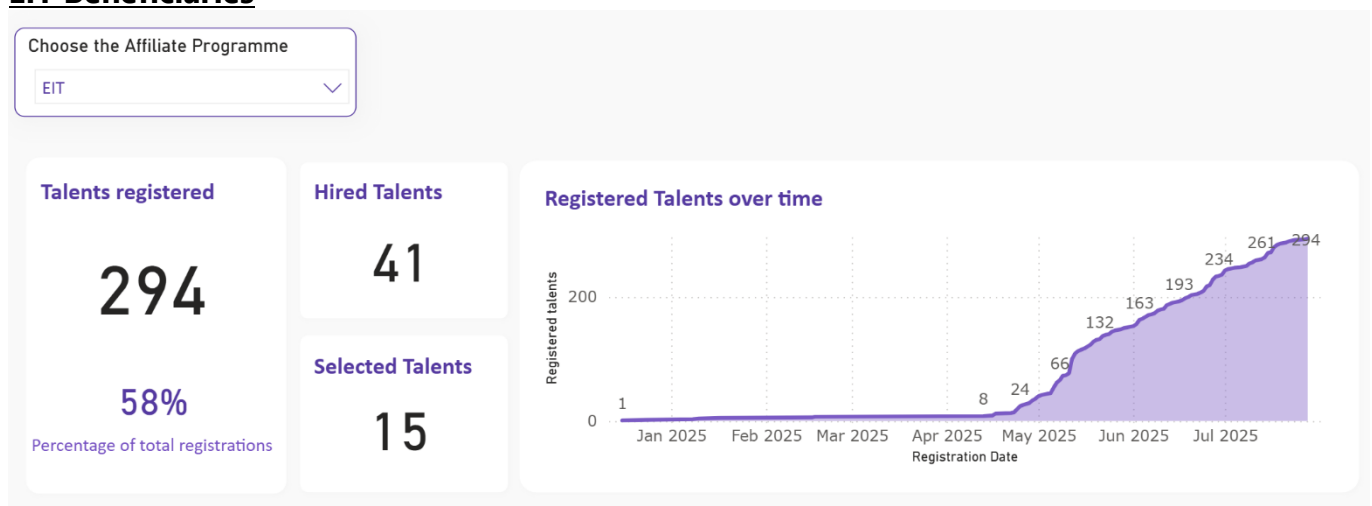


Figure 10 - EIT Registered Talents over time (Data source: InnoNext Platform, July 2025)

A sharp rise is observed in the number of **EIT participants**, following the integration of the EIT programme into InnoNext in **April 2025**. It is important to note that EIT participation has a fixed timeframe, ending in December 2025, by which all Innovation Internships must be completed. A continuous upward trend is visible throughout **May and June 2025** (M10 and M11).

Additionally, EIT beneficiaries display more diversity than those from EIC, ERC, MSCA, and RI programmes. While the latter are typically DeepTech-focused and research-intensive, EIT participants often include Master's Label students categorized as Aspiring Innovators, individuals with an entrepreneurial and interdisciplinary approach, that dialogue well with InnoNext objectives.



Talents status

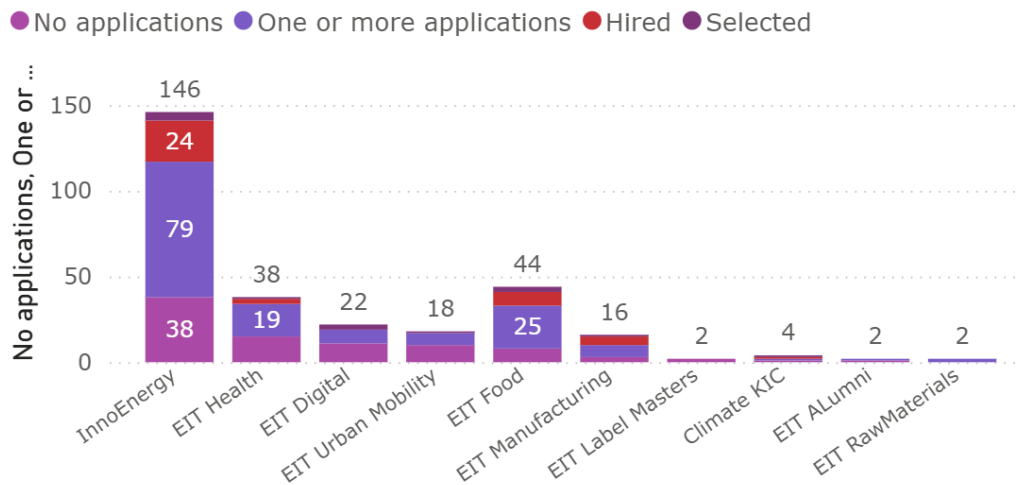


Figure 11 - EIT Talents Status (Data source: InnoNext Platform, July 2025)

General Grow on InnoNext Platform

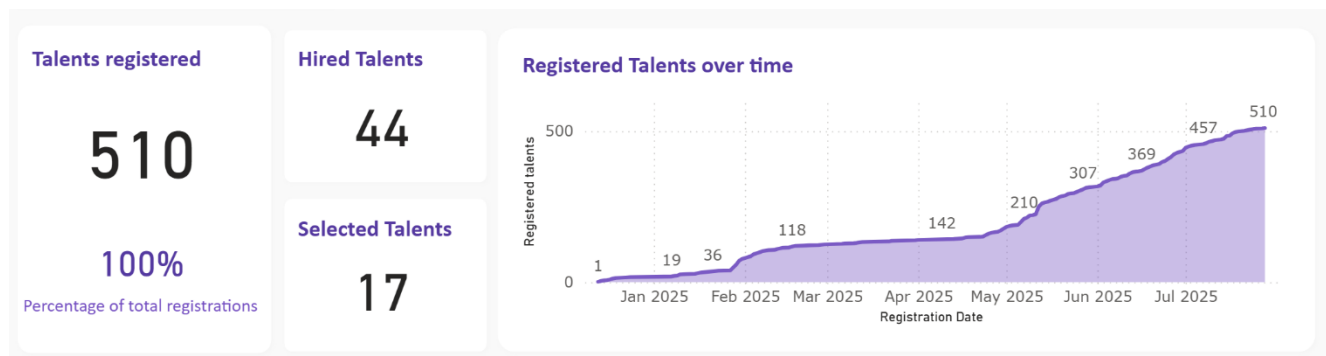


Figure 12 - Visiting Talents Registration flow (Data source: InnoNext Platform, July 2025)

A growth trend is also visible across the other programmes starting from May 2025 (M10), which coincides with the Monitoring Meeting and the distribution of the new **Media Kits** aimed at relaunching communication activities. The media kit is described and presented in Deliverable 4.2 – Report on Communication and Dissemination Actions.

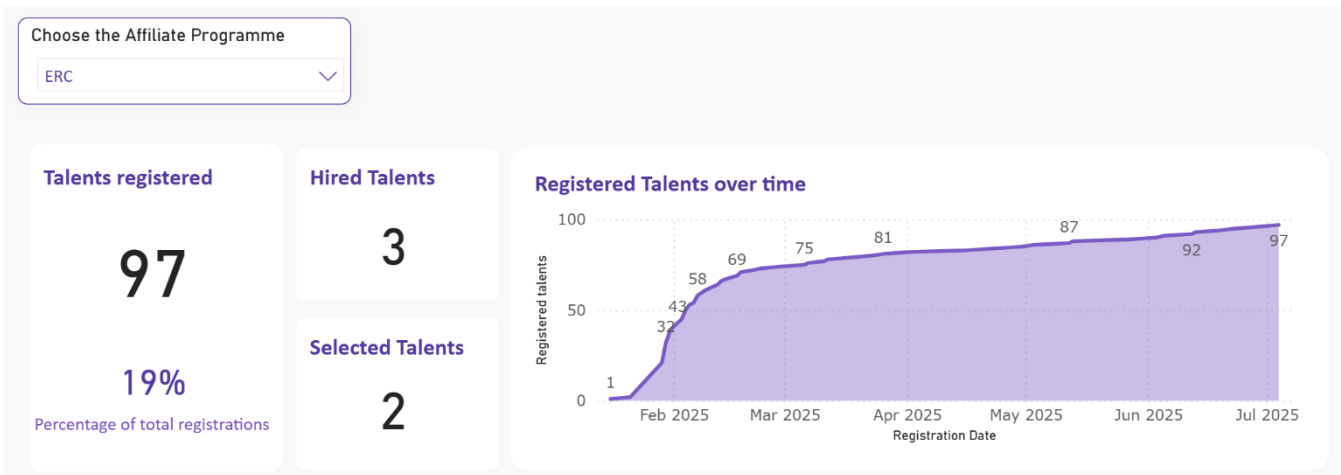


Figure 13 - ERC Talents Registered over time (Data source: InnoNext Platform, July 2025)

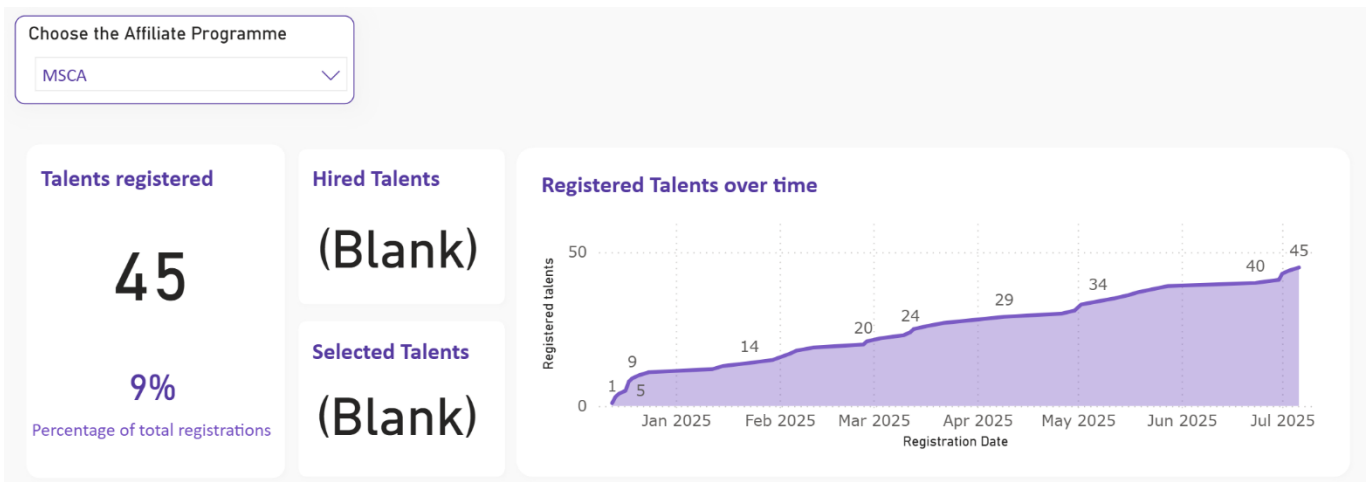


Figure 14 - MSCA Talents Registered over time (Data source: InnoNext Platform, July 2025)

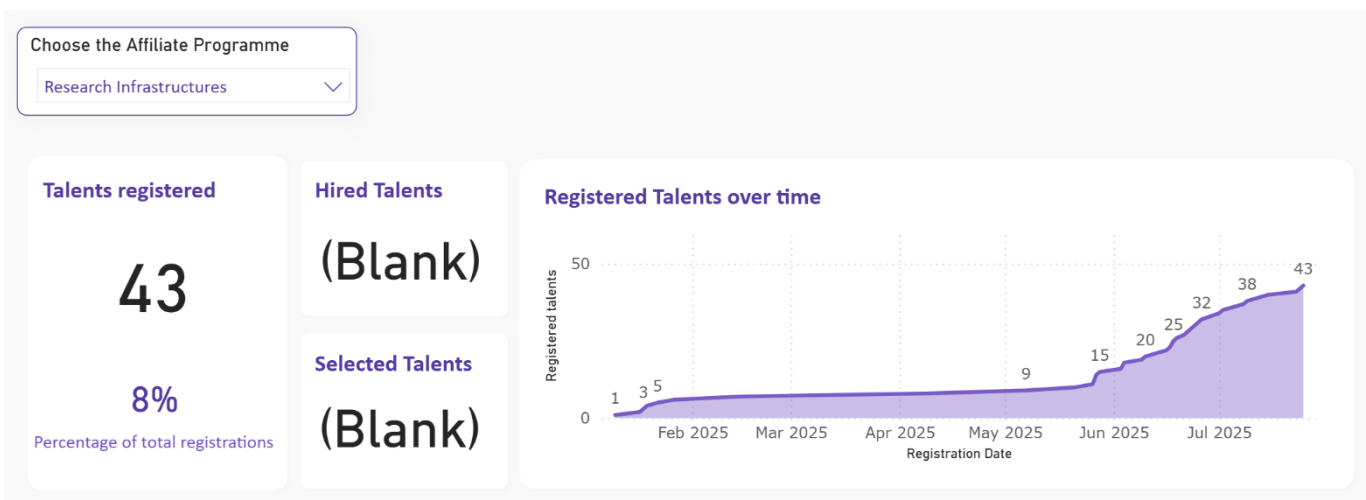


Figure 15 - RI Talents Registered over time (Data source: InnoNext Platform, July 2025)



Talents Usual Place of Work

An update on the geographic distribution of the talents is provided below, based on their usual place of work or the location of their university/research programme.

Table 3 - Talents per Country (Data source: Dashboard, 10th July 2025)

Country	M9	M12
Australia	-	1
Austria	4	22
Belgium	5	14
Brazil	-	1
Colombia	-	2
Cyprus	1	1
Czech Republic	3	2
Czechia	-	5
Denmark	3	6
Estonia	1	1
Finland	5	27
France	8	35
Germany	12	33
Greece	5	8
Hungary	1	2
India	-	5
Ireland	3	9
Israel	-	2
Italy	13	31
Kenya	-	1
Lebanon	-	1
Lithuania	1	1
Luxembourg	2	2
Malaysia	-	1
Malta	-	1
Netherlands	7	26
Nigeria	-	2
Norway	2	4
Poland	1	6
Portugal	7	21
Romania	-	4
Serbia	-	1
South Africa	-	1
Spain	15	65
Sweden	7	78
Switzerland	4	7



Turkey	1	3
United Kingdom	9	23
Zambia	-	1

An important point to highlight regarding the current work location of the talents is that it often does not match their official place of residence. **More than 6% of the talents are non-EU citizens** holding residence permits for work or research purposes.

The InnoNext Team has received numerous inquiries related to visa and residence permit issues (see Section 4.3.6 - Tutoring), particularly regarding whether participating in an InnoNext Innovation Internship could allow for an extension of an existing visa.

Additionally, in cases where relocation within the EU is required, the type of visa held by the talent may impose limitations on their ability to move and work across borders.

1	Algeria
1	Australia
15	Austria
1	Bangladesh
14	Belgium
1	Brazil
2	China
1	Colombia
1	Cuba
1	Cyprus
7	Czechia
6	Denmark
2	Estonia
23	Finland
34	France
1	Georgia
37	Germany
8	Greece
1	Guam
1	Hungary
10	India
8	Ireland
2	Israel
37	Italy
1	Japan
1	Kenya
1	Lithuania
2	Luxembourg
1	Malaysia
25	Netherlands
1	Nigeria
2	Norway
7	Poland
26	Portugal
4	Romania
1	Serbia
1	Slovakia
1	South Africa
62	Spain
74	Sweden
5	Switzerland
1	Trinidad and Tobago
3	Turkey
1	United Arab Emirates
18	United Kingdom

Figure 16 - Place of Residence of VT (Data source: Dashboard, 10th July 2025)



Talents status

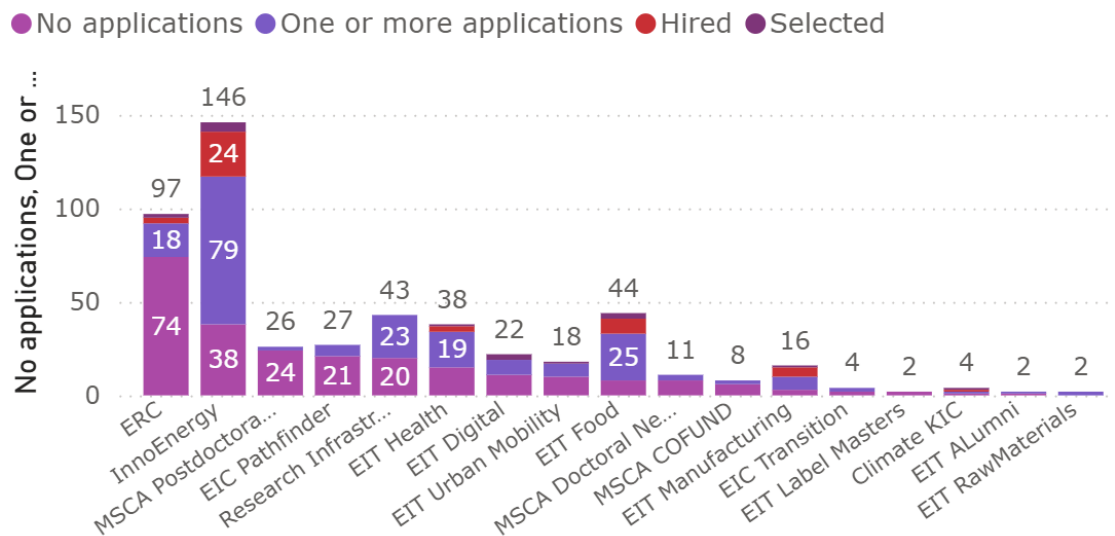


Figure 17 - Talents Status (Data source: Dashboard, July 2025)

One clear takeaway from the Figure 17 is that **a significant number of talents have not yet submitted any applications for the opportunities available on the InnoNext platform.** This may be due to various factors, such as a mismatch between the talents' interests and the needs of the companies, misalignment in the research focus of the two parties, or difficulties navigating the platform.

This highlights one of InnoNext's upcoming priorities: to better understand the engagement activity from the user point of view, in order to define targeted actions that can encourage and facilitate applications from talents.

Talents' main competences*

- Applied plant sciences, plant breeding, agroecology and ...
- Climatology and climate change
- Communication systems, wireless technology, high-freq...
- Digital medicine, e-medicine, medical applications of arti...
- Electronic properties of materials, surfaces, interfaces, na...
- Energy, transportation and mobility
- Environmental and climate change, societal impact and ...
- Epigenetics
- Geology, tectonics, volcanology
- Innovative methods and modelling in molecular, structur...
- Land use and planning
- Machine learning, statistical data processing and applica...
- Microbiome and host physiology
- Nanomaterials engineering, e.g. nanoparticles, nanoporo...
- Neurocognitive psychology
- Photochemistry
- Plant pathology and pest resistance



Figure 18 - Talents' main competences (Data source: Dashboard, July 2025)



4.3.2 Hosting Companies

The Following section gives an overview on the achievement of the following KPIs.

KPI Monitoring	KPI3.1: 600+ internships in 2 years
-----------------------	--

As with the talents, the number of hosting companies registered on the InnoNext platform has seen significant growth between Month 9 (M9) and Month 12 (M12). This increase is strongly linked to the relaunch of communication efforts through EU partner programmes following the Monitoring Meeting held in mid-May (M10).

Additionally, the inclusion of the EIT programme in the InnoNext Initiative also had a notable impact (M9).

Indicators	M9	M12
Hosting Companies Signed on InnoNext		
Hosting Companies	63	216
EIC	41	81
EIT	22	135
Open Positions	23	141

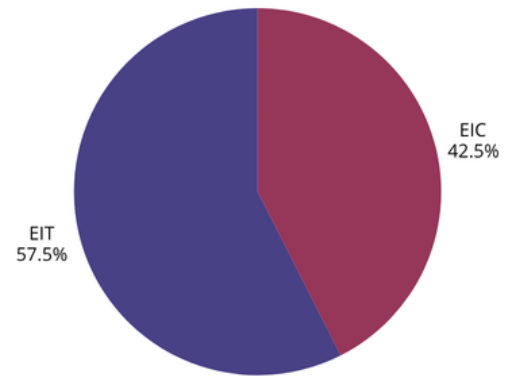


Figure 19 - Hosting Companies on the Platform (Data source: Dashboard, July 2025)

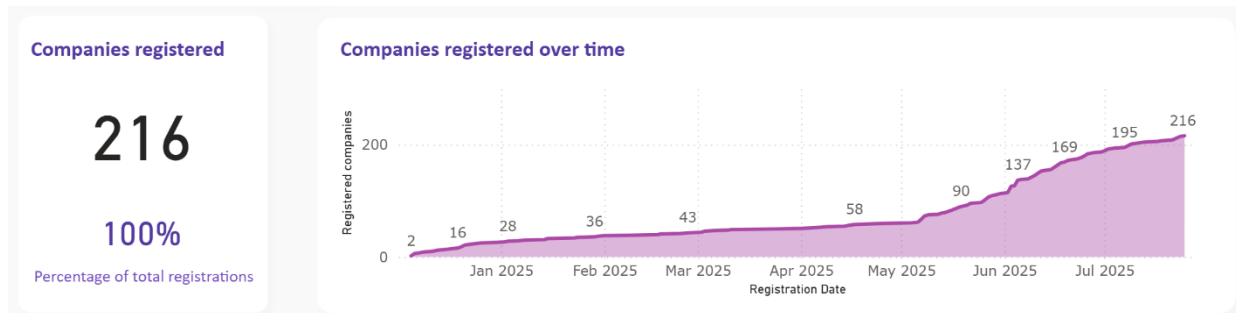


Figure 20 - HC Registered over time (Data source: Dashboard, July 2025)

In May 2025, startups and SMEs supported by the **EIC Pathfinder programme** were also included and are able to participate as Hosting Companies. This expansion broadened the range of potential beneficiaries from the EIC programme.

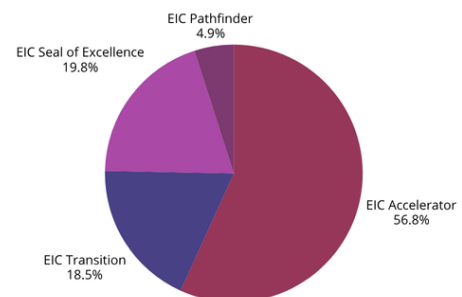


Figure 21 - EIC Companies on the Platform (Data source: Dashboard, July 2025)



Companies Information

Over 70% of the hosting companies currently registered on the InnoNext platform have between 1 and 15 employees (Figure 22). This is clearly linked to the nature of the programmes involved, which are specifically designed to support the growth of startups and SMEs.

This ecosystem characteristic leads to a relevant consideration: **many of the startups and SMEs benefiting from InnoNext may not have the internal structure to easily manage administrative and onboarding processes** for talents.

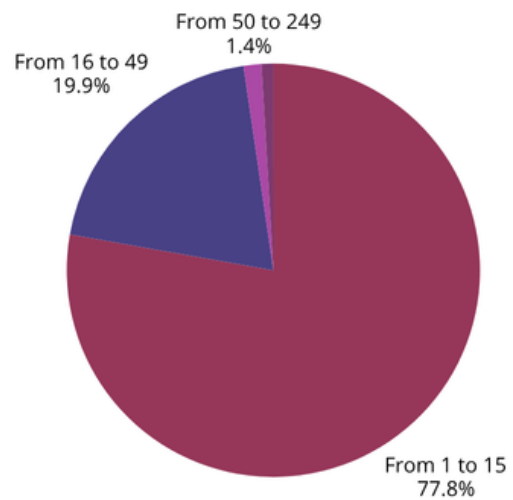


Figure 22 - Hosting Companies employees (Data source: Dashboard, July 2025)

An interesting insight concerns the status of companies registered on the platform.

There are two main stages a company must go through before being able to publish an opportunity:

- Not Verified Yet (Prospect in the platform):** After initial registration, companies enter a verification phase where they are required to submit specific documentation to confirm eligibility and acknowledge the InnoNext process (Letter of Commitment and Certificate/Letter of Engagement for EIT participants). **At this stage, companies cannot access the platform's full functionalities.** This status is maintained until the necessary documents are submitted.
- Verified (Client in the platform):** Once the documentation is received and validated, the company becomes "Verified" and can publish internship opportunities on the InnoNext platform. (For further details on the flow, see Deliverable 3.1 – *The InnoNext Scheme*)

Status ● verified ● not verified yet

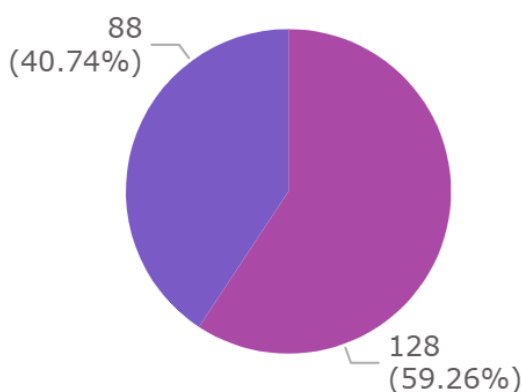


Figure 23 - HC status on the Platform (Data source: Dashboard, July 2025)

The chart on the left shows the percentage of companies that have completed the process and are now able to publish their internship opportunities.

Just over half have completed their registration by submitting the required documentation.

This gap may be attributed to several factors:

- Failure to receive the documentation.
- Difficulty in completing the application forms.
- Challenges in identifying the correct documents needed to validate EIT-related eligibility.



- Oversight or delay by the designated company representative.

4.3.3 Opportunities

The Following sections give an overview on the achievement of the following KPIs.

KPI Monitoring	KPI3.3: 300+ deep tech internships KPI3.4: 300+ aspiring innovator internships
-----------------------	---

Additional valuable insights emerge when analyzing the published vacancies in relation to the companies currently verified on the platform.

As with the growth in the number of beneficiaries, the number of open positions has also increased significantly from May 2025 to July 2025.

This rise in published internship opportunities has contributed to **greater dynamism within the platform**, generating increased engagement and interest from talents seeking opportunities that align with their profiles.

Stream of the published opportunities

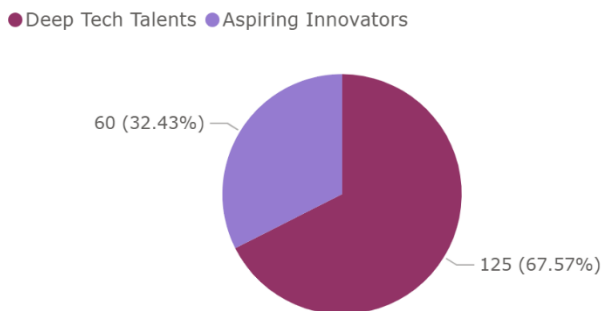


Figure 24 - Opportunities Stream (Data source: Dashboard, July 2025)

Among the currently open opportunities, **the majority, over 65%, are focused on finding Deep Tech talents**, while **32% target Aspiring Innovators**, talents with broader, cross-cutting competencies not strictly tied to a single research domain.

Opportunities published over time

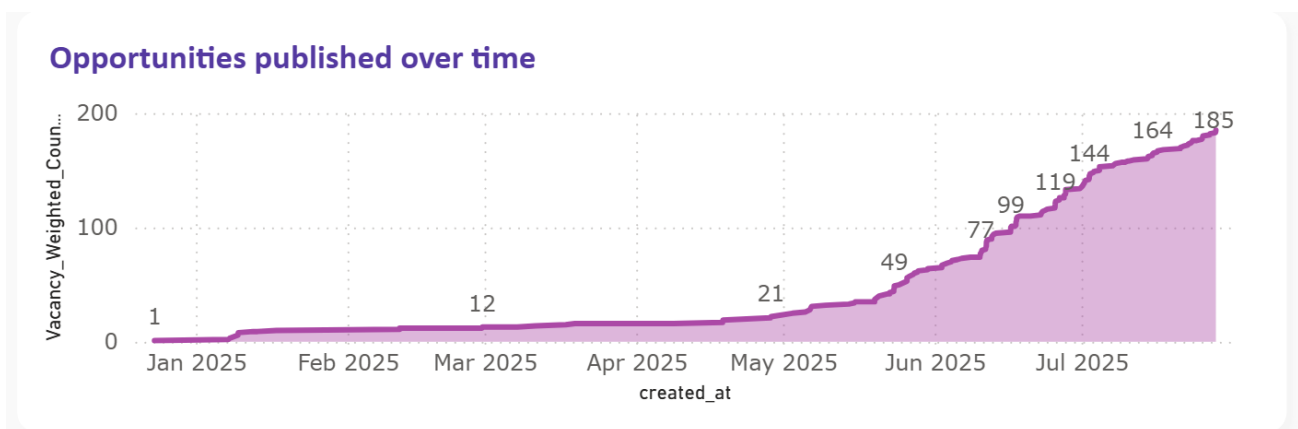


Figure 25 - Opportunities Published over the time (Data source: Dashboard, July 2025)

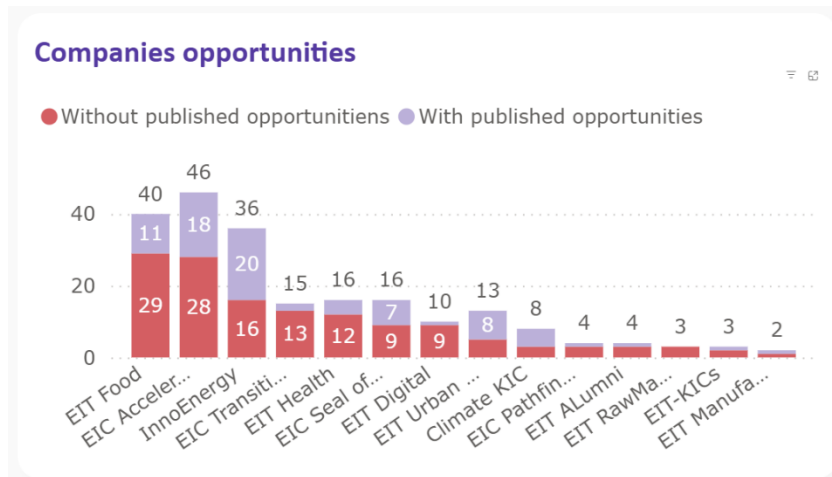


Figure 26 - Companies who published an Opportunity (Data source: Dashboard, July 2025)

Among the Hosting Companies (HCs) registered on the InnoNext platform, **fewer than half have actually published an opportunity to engage talents**. As of July 2025, **fewer than 20 companies** have successfully launched an Innovation Internship.

For companies that have published vacancies, **the average number of opportunities posted is 2 per company**. Additionally, some companies have **hired more than one candidate for the same position**.

An analysis of the available data shows that vacancies remain active for an average of 2 months. **Companies that successfully matched with a talent took an average of 30 days from the publication of the position**.

Most requested competences in the published opportunities*

Competences are mapped through the taxonomy of the ERC Evaluation panels and keywords, which includes a total of 337 competencies.

Field

- Computer Science and Informatics: Informati...
- Physical and Analytical Chemical Sciences: A...
- Products and Processes Engineering: Produc...
- Systems and Communication Engineering: EI...

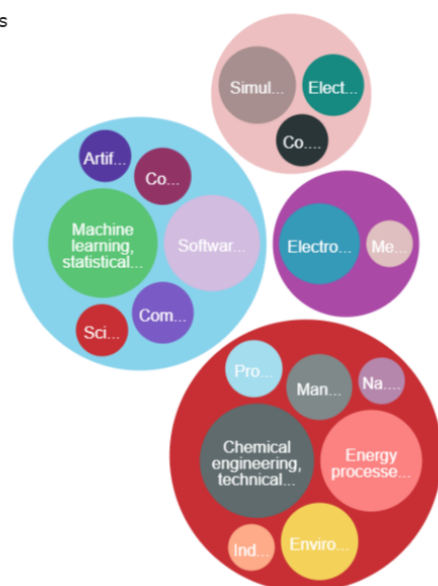


Figure 27 - Most requested competences in the published opportunities (Data source: Dashboard, July 2025)



4.3.4 Matching and Innovation Internship

The Following sections give an overview on the achievement of the following KPIs.

KPI Monitoring	KPI3.1: 600+ internships in 2 years KPI3.3: 300+ deep tech internships KPI3.4: 300+ aspiring innovator internships
-----------------------	---

From M9 to M12, one of the most significant milestones achieved by the InnoNext project has been the consolidation of the first matches and the launch of the first Innovation Internships.

This positive trend is linked not only to the key events described in Section 3, but also to an in-depth analysis of the InnoNext Scheme and user experience conducted by the InnoNext Consortium during the previous months.

In particular, a “manual” matching effort carried out in M9, based on the identification of common skill sets, enabled the team to spot specific challenges in the initial configuration of the InnoNext process (see Annex 1 – Monitoring Meeting Slide).

Activated Internships



A key issue was the role of the **Declaration of Honour (DoH)**, a document required to all talents (see *Deliverable 3.1 – The InnoNext Scheme* for details) at the moment of registration and/or when applying to each individual vacancy. The DoH serves as a self-declaration of eligibility and includes confirmation that the Visiting Talent has received approval from their project supervisor, project investigator, or project coordinator prior to initiating the internship.

Previously, a candidate could apply to a position, but their application would only become visible to the company **after the DoH had been uploaded.**

A pivotal improvement in the user experience was the **postponement of the DoH submission to an Internship administrative check stage.** This configuration makes the experience agile and dynamic both for VTs and HCs. The new deadline to submit the DoH is when the match between the Visiting Talent and Hosting Company is confirmed and both parties are ready to proceed with the Innovation Internship Agreement. At this stage, the Talent must deliver the signed DoH confirming their eligibility, before signing the Internship Agreement with the Hosting Company.

Additionally, the **candidate status tracking system** was updated (see D3.1), requiring the Hosting Company to label selected candidates accordingly. This helps the InnoNext team monitor which talents have been officially selected, hired and when internships are activated.

The chart below illustrates **the increasing number of talents who have obtained the “Hired” status** on the platform, an upward trend that directly correlates with the improved handling of the DoH process.

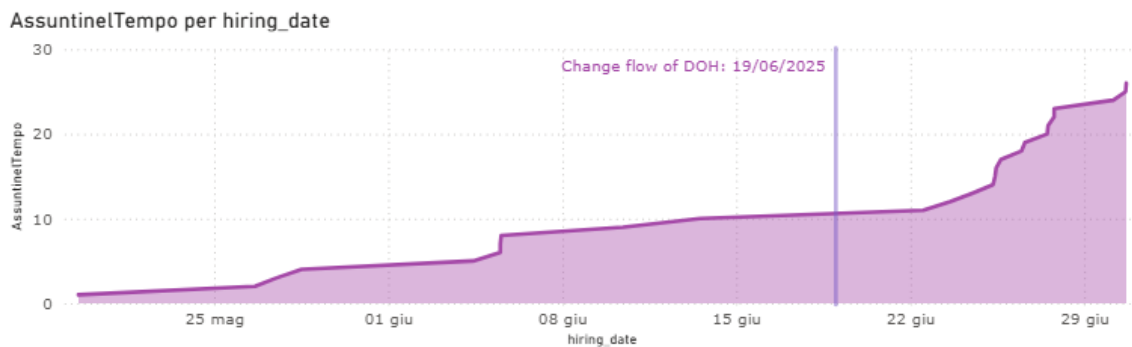


Figure 28 - Hiring Talents related with the DoH postponement (Data source: Dashboard, July 2025)

Below is a visual representation of the matches confirmed subdivided according to the Programme.

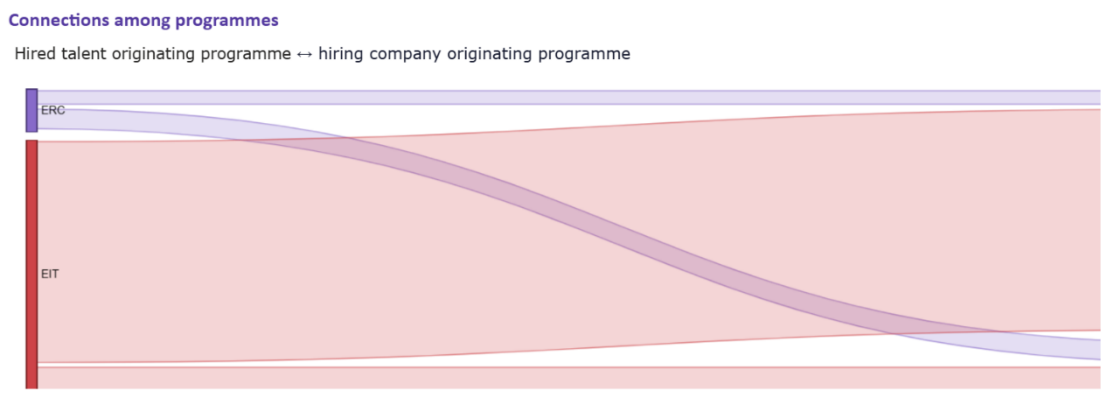


Figure 29 - Hired talent per Programme - Hiring Company per Programme (Data source: Dashboard, July 2025)

The first matches reveal some interesting insights, particularly regarding the **intersections between the different programmes** of the beneficiaries. We can identify the following scenarios:

- **VT and HC belong to the same programme and the same Programme stream.** In this scenario, reflected in the feedback collected in the success stories (see Section 4.3.9 – Success Stories), the interaction is shaped by a shared mindset and similar approach, based on mutual familiarity with the same ecosystem and its dynamics.
- **VT and HC belong to the same programme (e.g., EIT) but to different streams (e.g., different KICs).** This case presents opportunities for knowledge exchange across thematic areas, as individuals bring similar innovation-oriented perspectives but operate in distinct domains.
- **VT and HC belong to different programmes.** This is the most diverse and potentially enriching combination, offering valuable cross-programme collaboration between individuals with different skills, visions, and approaches to research and entrepreneurship.



4.3.5 Financial Support for Third Parties

The Following section gives an overview on the achievement of the following KPIs.

KPI Monitoring	KPI3.5: ≥50% of the InnoNext budget allocated to support internships
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Below is the current number of beneficiaries validated for Third-Party Financial Support. It is important to note that, as of July 2025, a part of the confirmed matches is on the process of validation as beneficiaries of FSTP.

The Table below refer specifically to those who have signed the Financial Agreement and have officially confirmed the start of their Innovation Internship.

For EIT beneficiaries, the table also highlights the number of individuals who have been awarded the mobility allowance.

(See D3.1 for more information about FSTP.)

Table 4 - FSTP beneficiaries (Data source: Financial Agreement Signed, July 2025)

Programme Beneficiaries of FSTP procedure	M9	M12
EIC Pathfinder (Mobility Allowance)	0	0
EIT Beneficiaries (Reimbursement)	0	42
EIT Mobility	0	20
ERC beneficiaries (Reimbursement)	0	3



4.3.6 Tutoring

The Following sections give an overview on the achievement of the following KPIs.

KPI Monitoring	KPI3.6: Intern Satisfaction (on a Likert scale) at least 75% express 4 out of 5 KPI3.7: Company Satisfaction (on a Likert scale) at least 75% express 4 out of 5
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The tutoring activities include several actions aimed not only at gathering insights into the beneficiaries' experience with InnoNext, but also at fostering a human-centered approach that helps build trust throughout the process.

This human component is essential to effectively support the activation of the internships. Feedback collected so far (see Section 4.3.8 – Survey) highlights that the finalisation of the process often relies on a sense of trust between the beneficiaries and the InnoNext team. Tailored support and personalised interaction play a key role in making beneficiaries feel guided and confident at each stage.

For the tutoring activity, the most frequently and effectively used contact method is **email communication**. This channel supports a multi-level relationship with beneficiaries and is designed to guide and assist them throughout the entire process.

The email system also enables the collection of valuable feedback that contributes to the continuous improvement of the InnoNext Scheme, based on users' real experiences.

Four dedicated email accounts are used to manage communication flows:

- **info@**: Handles general inquiries from all potential beneficiaries and directs eligible users through the registration process on the platform.
- **companies@**: Manages the flow of Hosting Companies (HCs) within the platform, providing support through all steps up to the match.
- **talents@**: Manages the flow of Visiting Talents (VTs) within the platform, providing support through all steps up to the match.
- **administration@**: Handles the administrative process that begins once a match between VT and HC is confirmed.

Below is an overview of the aggregated data regarding the requests received via email. The main topics raised through these communications are also highlighted, as they have guided improvements in the user experience and inform future actions and potential updates to the platform.

Email Volume & Response Rates



Table 5 - Email Volume & Response Rates (Data source: Mailinbox Database, July 2025)

Mailbox	Emails Received	Emails Sent	Response Rate (%)	Avg. Response Time	Median Response Time
info@	389	390	97.2%	18.4 h	5.5 h
talents@	413	944	98.0%	20.2 h	4.3 h
companies@	1146	450	96.5%	26.8 h	8.1 h
administration@	349	308	98.3%	14.7 h	4.0 h

NB: Volumes are cumulative to June 2025, and statistics are derived from mailbox data.

Executive Notes

- **Response Times:** All mailboxes consistently reply in under 24 hours to >79% of requests, and administration/talents respond extremely quickly (~90% within a day).
- **Closure:** Over 60% of requests (all addresses) are solved at first reply. More complex threads, especially about eligibility, typically get 1 follow-up.
- **Topic Mix:** Eligibility dominates initial requests ("info" and "talents"), while "administration" handles the bulk of contract and payment logistics.
- **Efficiency:** All channels maintain excellent response rates, proactive follow-up on open issues, and effective hand-off across relevant teams.

Topic-Specific Breakdown (% of total received emails)

Definitions:

- **Eligibility:** questions on requirements/criteria, documents, affiliations.
- **Administrative:** contracts, onboarding, timesheets, procedures, payments.
- **Technical:** bug reports, uploads, platform issues/support.
- **Other:** testimonials, networking, general information, event invites.

Table 6 - Mail Topic (Data source: Mailinbox Database, July 2025)

Mailbox	Eligibility	Administrative	Technical	Other
info@	58.1%	26.5%	10.8%	4.6%
talents@	54.9%	24.7%	12.8%	7.6%
companies@	49.3%	29.1%	13.2%	8.4%
administration@	27.5%	59.7%	6.0%	6.9%

info@ - Breakdown by topic (approximate percentages):

Table 7 - info@ Mail Topic (Data source: Mailinbox Database, July 2025)

Category	% of Requests	Typical Response	Issues
Visa/Residency	27%	Policy explanation, self-management	Non-EU/EEA frustration, lack of direct support
Eligibility/Documentation	32%	Clarification, process guidance	Mis-categorization, certificate upload issues



Admin/Legal/Taxes	34%	Stepwise guidance, next steps	Payment, onboarding, document delays, dual-funding rules
Other	7%	Technical/mentoring/logistics support	Platform access, technical errors

Insights:

Most queries revolve around eligibility documentation, visa policies, and onboarding processes. While the response rate and time are strong, the team spends substantial effort on repeat explanations about eligibility proof and administrative steps, partly due to complex, multi-national participation and frequent changes in participants’ status mid-process.

talents@ - Breakdown by topic (approximate percentages):

Table 8 - talents@ Mail Topic (Data source: Mail inbox Database, July 2025)

Category	% of Requests	Main Response Modality	Typical Challenges
Visa/Permit Issues	25%	Policy clarification, self-management guidance	Frustrations from non-EU/remote applicants; limits of support
Eligibility	35%	Eligibility verification, instructions	Confusion on program eligibility/beneficiary categories
Administrative/Legal	35%	Stepwise guidance, next steps	Changing requirements, cross-border logistics, payment details
Other	5%	Info, tech help, status checking	System hiccups, one-off queries

Insights:

- **Visa and Eligibility Overlap:** Numerous inquiries from non-EU candidates regarding visa requirements for physical or remote internships; many are seeking exceptions or alternative arrangements when not present in the EU.
- **Document Correction Requests:** Regular workflow interruptions caused by mis-uploaded certificates or eligibility documents—improving upload guidance and platform prompts might reduce such cases.
- **Stepwise Onboarding Support:** Many emails are follow-ups in a support chain, stepping talents through matching, selection, offer, and activation, showing a high need for granular and proactive guidance.
- **Proactivity Linked to Deadlines:** Spikes in email activity around deadlines for internship activation, especially for 6-month placements, with increased urgency and questions on process timing.

companies@ - Breakdown by topic (approximate percentages):



Table 9 - companies@ Mail Topic (Data source: Mail inbox Database, July 2025)

Category	% of Emails	Typical Inquiry Topics	Trends
Administrative/Support	30%	Registration, onboarding, next steps, event reminders, job post corrections	Duplicate queries, prompt follow-ups
Eligibility/Beneficiary	25%	Document requirements, affiliation checks, certificate confusion	Recurring clarifications needed
Technical/Platform	15%	Login/access, document upload, portal navigation, lost communication	Occasional escalations, quick fixes
Candidate Process/Application	25%	Talent selection, posting, status changes, hiring steps, contract questions	High-touch, needs clear templates
Trends & Miscellaneous	5%	Testimonial requests, feedback, collaborations, out-of-office replies, missed deadlines	Few, but relevant for process monitoring

Insights:

- **FAQ & Automated Guidance:** Many queries, especially about eligibility and document requirements, could be preempted with a dynamic, updated FAQ or chatbot support.
- **Template-Driven Communications:** Templated emails for each stage (registration, talent selection, contract signing) help reduce confusion and repetitive exchanges.
- **Platform UX:** Streamlined navigation and more robust message notification systems would further ease the onboarding for new companies.
- **Monitoring & Proactive Reminders:** Current follow-up practices are effective, but automation could help minimize bottlenecks near deadlines or document handoffs.

administration@ - Breakdown by topic (approximate percentages):

Table 10 - administration@ Mail Topic (Data source: Mail inbox Database, July 2025)

Topic Area	Typical Frequency	Example Actions Taken
Onboarding/Admin	High	Emailing contract templates; verifying "Hired" platform status
Timesheets & Finance	High	Sending templates, clarifying payment schedules, handling account changes
Eligibility Clarifications	Medium	Investigating affiliations, confirming eligibility, detailed explanations
Platform Support	Medium	Step-by-step guides, troubleshooting user actions
Compliance Reminders	High	Automated reminder emails for surveys, timesheets, and documentation
Success Story Outreach	Low-Medium	Invitations for testimonials, instructions for contributions

Insights:



- **Process Automation:** Standardized responses and recurring reminders suggest further process automation (e.g., auto-reminders, document verification checks) could reduce manual follow-up.
- **FAQ and Platform Guidance:** Many issues relate to confusion over platform actions and eligibility; enhancements to FAQ visibility and platform tooltips could lessen user support demand.
- **Data Security:** Sensitivity around changes to financial information is well-managed but continued vigilance is necessary.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** The positive, proactive approach to communication fosters trust, but greater use of template messaging for common questions could further improve efficiency.

Webinars

The tutoring activity also includes the **Info Session Webinars**, two open events addressed to all potential beneficiaries of the InnoNext Project. These webinars aimed to present the initiative to interested participants and provided a dedicated session for Q&A.

Date	Session Title
May 12 th 2025	Talents Info Session
May 19 th 2025	Companies Info Session

Two webinars have been successfully delivered, reaching over **400 registered participants** and attracting approximately **200 live viewers**. The recordings are available on the InnoNext Website, in the Resources Section (<https://www.innonext-project.eu/en/resources>).

During the Webinars implementation, **key participation data and insights have been collected, particularly from the Q&A sessions**. The questions raised provide a clear overview of the main concerns and areas of interest from potential EIT beneficiaries.

A significant number of questions focused on **eligibility criteria**, confirming the importance of continuing to provide detailed and accessible guidance. Another frequently raised topic was the **Certificate/Engagement Letter**, which remains one of the most debated issues related to the EIT Beneficiaries.

To address this, two specific FAQ are included in the FAQ section of the website and a clarifying note is being added to the application form.

During the session dedicated to hosting companies, a recurring concern related to the **initiative's timeline for EIT beneficiaries**, who are only eligible until December 2025. For this reason, the importance of completing registration on the platform as early as possible was emphasized.

Lastly, some confusion has been observed among companies regarding the correct identification of their **programme of origin**, particularly in relation to what should be entered in the application form.



4.3.7 Mentoring

The Following section gives an overview on the achievement of the following KPIs.

KPI Monitoring	<p>KPI3.6: Intern Satisfaction (on a Likert scale) at least 75% express 4 out of 5</p> <p>KPI3.7: Company Satisfaction (on a Likert scale) at least 75% express 4 out of 5</p>
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As part of the InnoNext Mentoring, a **series of workshops** has been designed to support both Talents and Companies in developing key entrepreneurial and business skills. Mentoring is conceived as a support activity to **enhance the innovation experience during the internship**. A dedicated area on the website has been created for the InnoNext Community, made up of both Visiting Talents and Hosting Companies. This space is designed to be always accessible and easily shareable, including with the **broader teams of each beneficiary**.

The following sessions have been scheduled, with the first two already completed:

- May 30th, 2025 – Cultivating an Entrepreneurial Mindset
- July 4th, 2025 – Lean Startup & Agile Principles
- September 4th, 2025 – Product Development
- November 4th, 2025 – Growth & Scalability Strategies

To monitor the effectiveness of the workshop and gather feedback, a **satisfaction questionnaire** was sent out after the first session. For the second session, a **QR code** linking to the feedback form was displayed at the end of the workshop, allowing participants to share their impressions immediately. This also enables those who watch the session recording at a later stage to contribute their feedback.

May 30th, 2025 - Cultivating an Entrepreneurial Mindset

The first workshop, *Cultivating an Entrepreneurial Mindset*, had a total duration of **186 minutes**, with **30 registered participants** and no cancellations.

Participants represented a wide geographic range, with the majority coming from **Italy, Portugal, Sweden, Austria, Ireland, Poland, and Serbia**. Other countries included the **United States, Spain, and India**, reflecting the international outreach of the workshop.

Participants raised questions during the session, highlighting common concerns faced in the early stages of entrepreneurship. Key topics included how to objectively assess an idea without bias, the relevance of competitor analysis at the initial stage, the extent of investment required to understand the market, and the feasibility of launching a startup that offers both products and services.

July 4th, 2025 – Lean Startup & Agile Principles

The second workshop, *Lean Startup & Agile Principles* lasted **183 minutes**. The number of registrants remained stable (**29 registrations**, with only 1 cancellation).



The participants represented a broad geographical spectrum, with a significant presence from **Italy** and **Sweden**, which accounted for the majority. Other countries of origin included **Spain, Poland, Serbia, Switzerland, France, Ireland, Germany**, and **Greece**. This diversity highlights the international outreach and appeal of the workshop.

One of the most relevant questions that emerged during the session was:

"Can the agile approach also be applied to the size of profit you are targeting? That is, instead of aiming for exponential growth, can you pursue small, incremental profits that eventually add up?"

Workshop Feedback Summary – “Lean Startup & Agile Principles” with Davide Rovera

Davide Rovera Synthetic Bio

Davide Rovera is a dynamic innovator and educator at the intersection of technology, entrepreneurship, and design. With a background in Industrial Engineering from Politecnico di Torino and international experience in Germany and the UK, he blends academic rigor with global insight. As a lecturer at Esade and IAAC, he inspires the next generation of founders through hands-on programs like eWorks. He co-founded Kili Ventures, investing in promising African startups, and mentors young entrepreneurs across the globe. His journey has taken him from Silicon Valley to Barcelona, shaping ventures and minds alike. Passionate about emerging tech and social impact, Davide often speaks at major events like the Mobile World Congress. He believes in education as a tool for empowerment and innovation as a driver of change. Through his work, he connects vision with execution, and people with purpose. His mission is clear: building a better future through entrepreneurship.

A **post-workshop satisfaction survey** was administered to participants to assess the relevance, effectiveness, and impact of the session. Below is a summary of the key findings based on three submitted responses:

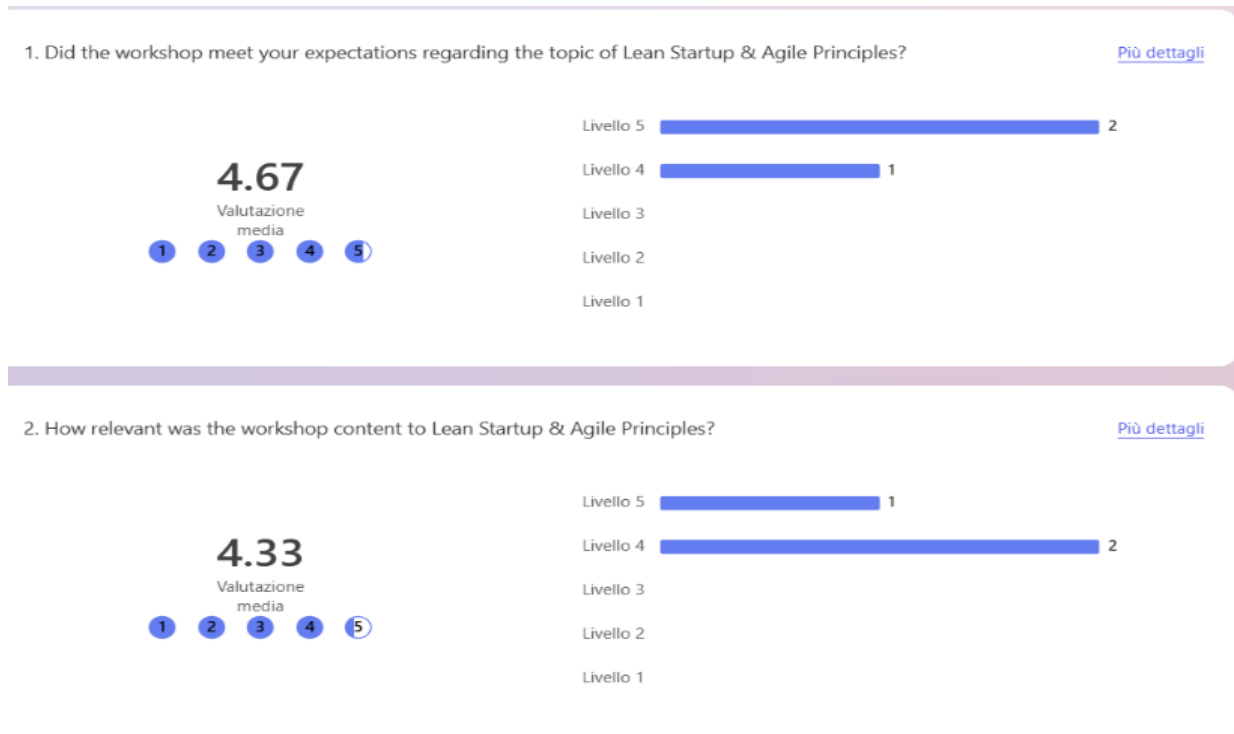


Figure 30 – Post-workshop satisfaction survey

1. Overall Satisfaction & Content Relevance

- All participants rated the workshop highly in terms of meeting their expectations, with scores of 4 or 5 out of 5.
- The relevance of the content to Lean Startup and Agile Principles was also rated positively (4–5 out of 5), indicating that the material aligned well with participants' interests and the advertised scope.

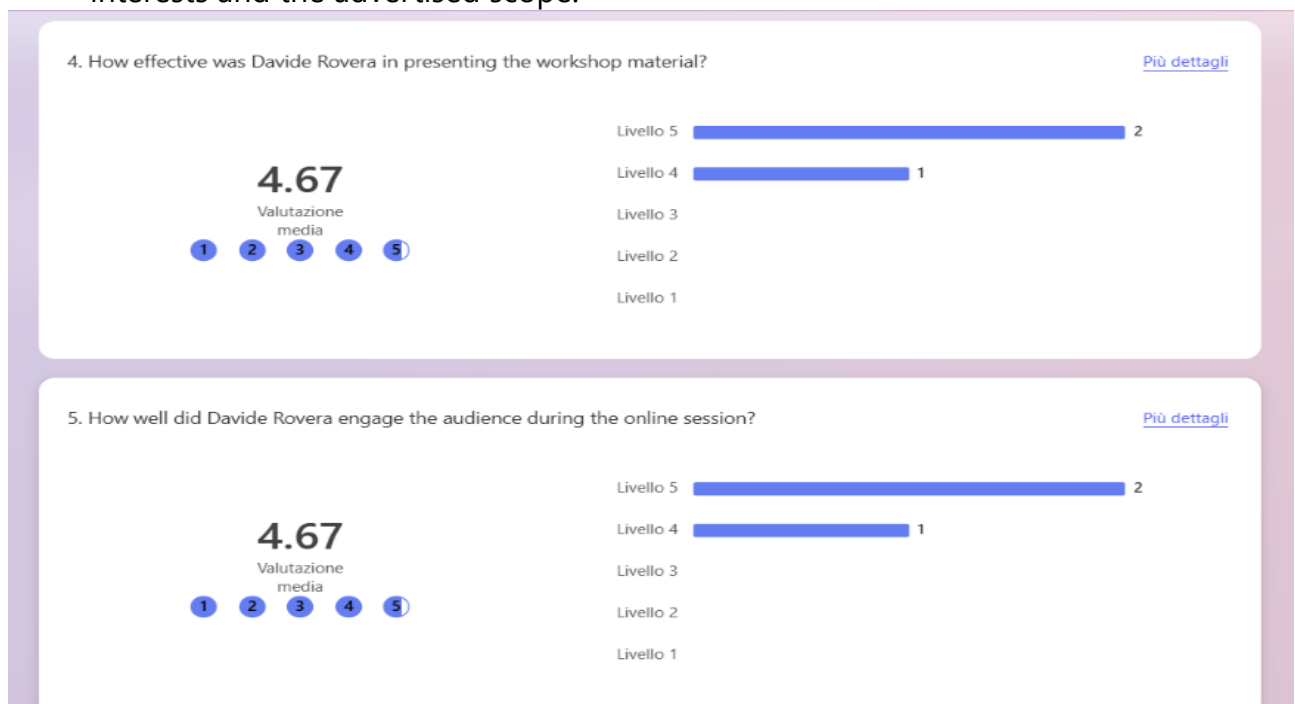


Figure 31 - Post-workshop satisfaction survey



2. Presenter Evaluation: Davide Rovera

- Davide Rovera received top marks (4–5 out of 5) for both his presentation effectiveness and ability to engage the audience.
- One participant highlighted clarity, use of everyday examples, and being “to the point” as key strengths of his presentation style.

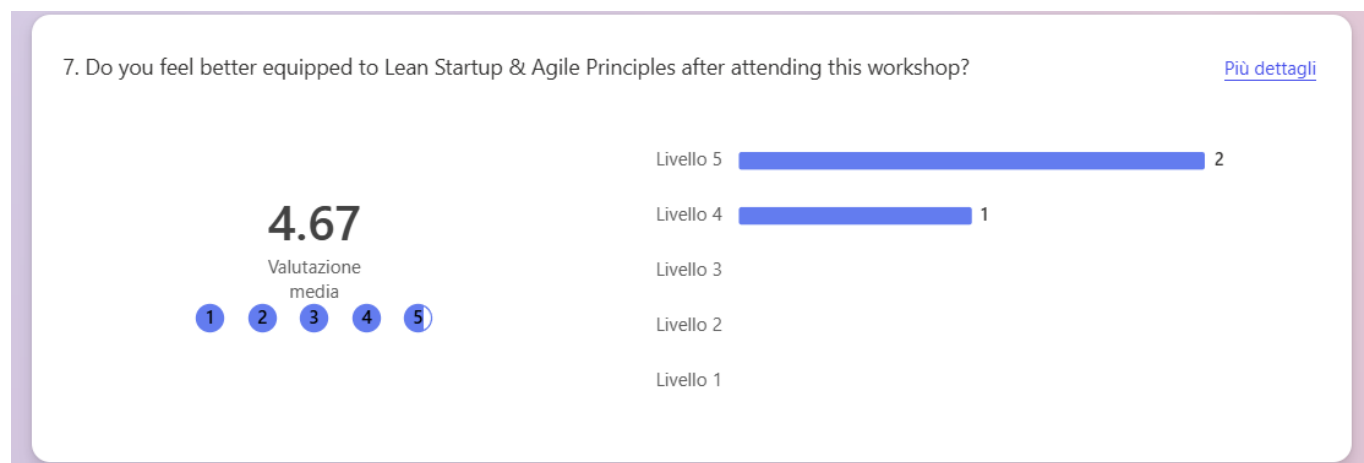


Figure 32 – Post-workshop satisfaction survey

3. Impact on Participants

- All respondents felt better equipped to apply Lean Startup and Agile Principles after attending the workshop (all rated this aspect as 5 out of 5, except one with 4).
- This suggests a strong learning outcome and practical value gained from the session.

4. Topics of Interest for Future Exploration

Participants expressed interest in diving deeper into the following areas:

- How to find investors and secure funding for projects
- Risk assessment and dealing with failure
- Training tailored to help scientists identify the value of their research and convert it into technology

These responses indicate a desire for future workshops to address **funding strategies, resilience in entrepreneurship**, and **technology transfer for researchers**.

5. Additional Comments

- One participant suggested focusing future training on helping **scientists translate research into innovation** — a clear indication of demand for targeted support in research commercialization.

The workshop was well received, with high marks for both content and delivery. Participants appreciated the clarity and practicality of the presentation and expressed a clear interest in future sessions that build on the foundations of Lean Startup by exploring investment, risk, and research valorization.

During the second workshop, InnoNext implemented a **mandatory questionnaire** to identify participants and understand which program or group they belong to.



However, **only 10 participants filled it out**, so the data collected represents only a partial snapshot of the attendees.

Declared Role	Count
Visiting Talents	9
Hosting Companies	1

Affiliate Program for VT	Count
EIT Alumni Member	1
Research Infrastructures	1
EIT Label Masters and Doctoral Programmes	2
EIC Pathfinder	2
EIC Transition	1
ERC	1
EIT Community	1



4.3.8 Survey

The Following sections give an overview on the achievement of the following KPIs.

KPI Monitoring	KPI3.6: Intern Satisfaction (on a Likert scale) at least 75% express 4 out of 5 KPI3.7: Company Satisfaction (on a Likert scale) at least 75% express 4 out of 5
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The monitoring process is structured around two types of surveys, each serving a specific purpose in tracking the participants' experience and the overall progress of the programme. The survey and self-assessment structure is described in D3.1 – The InnoNext Scheme – M12.

The monitoring process allows the InnoNext Team to:

- Track both the **internship journey and its outcomes**
- Fulfil **EU PPs reporting requirements**
- Collect valuable feedback from **both Talents and Companies**
- Ensure **continuous improvement** of the programme through data-driven insights

Table 11 – Survey and Self-Assessment collected up to July 2025

Survey Indicators	
VTs with a confirmed Internship	33
VT Survey Pre Internship Compiled (the survey will be send when the Innovation Internship Agreement will be signed)	28
HC Survey Pre Internship Compiled (the survey will be send when the Innovation Internship Agreement will be signed)	14
VTs and HCs which completed the self-assessment survey	38

Insight:

Follow-up reminders have already been sent to the remaining participants to encourage completion

The number of HC reflects the fact that several companies are **hosting multiple talents**, so the number of company entries is naturally lower than the number of talents.

In the following section some key aspects are highlighted. A completed overview is visible on the Annex 3 – Pre Internship Survey Overview.

The **Talent and Company Pre-Internship Surveys (July 2025)** offer valuable insights into user experience, motivations, and expectations around the InnoNext programme.

For **Talents**, nearly half discovered InnoNext through direct outreach from EU programmes, followed by word-of-mouth within project consortia. InnoNext social media played a more limited



role. Their main motivation was to **apply scientific knowledge in real-world settings**, collaborate with **startups/SMEs**, and enhance their **career development**. While many expressed an interest in entrepreneurship, 71% reported having already started, being currently developing, or considering launching their own business. In terms of usability:

- **93%** found the registration form easy to extremely easy
- **86%** had a smooth experience uploading required documentation
- **79%** rated the overall process as clear and positive

Most useful content included internship opportunities, FAQs, and resource templates. Direct email was the preferred support channel, **and 68% rated team support as very good or excellent**.

For **Hosting Companies**, most learned about InnoNext through EU programme communications, followed by social media and personal networks. Their primary reasons for participating were:

- **Access to top-tier talent (65%)**
- **Fully-funded internships (60%)**
- **Knowledge transfer (30%)**

Companies reported gaps in **technical skills** and **market/commercial understanding**, and appreciated the simplicity of the registration process (80% found it easy or very easy). As for content, FAQs, opportunities, and resources were seen as most valuable. Companies preferred direct email for communication, and **86% rated the support positively**. On mentoring, interest was split between webinars and group formats, though 40% indicated no interest at all.

4.3.9 Success Stories

The Following sections give an overview on the achievement of the following KPIs.

KPI Monitoring	<p>KPI3.6: Intern Satisfaction (on a Likert scale) at least 75% express 4 out of 5</p> <p>KPI3.7: Company Satisfaction (on a Likert scale) at least 75% express 4 out of 5</p>
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As part of our effort to continuously improve the InnoNext experience, we collect success stories from candidates who have officially confirmed their match and signed the Innovation Internship agreement.

Each story is based on three guiding questions:

1. **How the platform supported you**
2. **How the process went**
3. **What your expectations are for this collaboration**

This is an initial round of feedback gathering, offering valuable insights into candidates' motivations, expectations, and how InnoNext has supported their journey. These contributions help us better understand the impact of the initiative and how we can continue to meet the needs of our community.

Success Stories Collected



VT Success Stories	9
HC Success Stories	2

Talent Success Stories overview

Talents describe their experience with InnoNext in very positive terms. They particularly appreciate:

- the simplicity of the application and onboarding process,
- the efficiency of the matchmaking system,
- the human support from the InnoNext team, often described as “responsive,” “clear,” and “proactive,”
- the growth opportunities, both professional and personal,
- and the meaningfulness of the program, often seen as a real bridge between academia and industry.

Many talents highlight how rare it is to find EU-based initiatives that are so accessible, well-structured, and inclusive, and how impactful the experience has been for their careers.

Table 12 - VT Success Story Keywords

Keywords	
Keyword	Context
User-friendly / Intuitive	Referring to the platform and application process
Support	Describing the assistance from the InnoNext team
Smooth	Used to describe the entire experience, from sign-up to contract
Mentorship / Guidance	Highlighting the value of guidance received from the host company
Efficient	Applied to the structure and responsiveness of the platform
Accessible	For ease of use, matching process, and communication style
Real-world experience	A key value—applying academic skills in real industry scenarios
Opportunity	For learning, networking, CV building, and personal development
Bridge	Between academic background and the professional world
Hands-on experience	Involvement in day-to-day business and learning-by-doing
Matchmaking Matching	Refers to the talent-company connection process

Key Insights:

- Speed and simplicity are among the most appreciated features. Talents value not having to write long cover letters and being able to complete all steps quickly and easily.



- The human aspect is also a core strength: connecting with startup teams and learning from experienced professionals is seen as highly valuable.
- International access and exposure to high-potential European startups are considered distinctive advantages.
- Remote and hybrid experiences are also mentioned and appreciated, underlining the program's flexibility.

Hosting Company Success Story

Hosting companies view InnoNext as a strategic enabler that removes major hiring barriers, especially financial ones, allowing them to access high-quality international talent and build stronger, more diverse teams.

They see the initiative as mutually beneficial, where the company accelerates key growth activities while the interns gain real, hands-on experience. The program is described as flexible, supportive, and impactful, and the companies also emphasize the value of long-term capacity building.

Table 13 - HC Success Story Keywords

Keywords	
Keyword	Context
Access to Talent	Access to top-tier candidates, talent we truly need, hire talent
Diversity & Global Teams	International team, global environmental challenges, cross-cultural
Ease of Use / Platform UX	Clear and structured process, step-by-step guide, user-friendly
Team Support	Guidance, prompt answers, onboarding experience, with support from InnoNext
Strategic Impact	Build long-term capacity, meaningful experience, strategic opportunity
Financial Relief	Without the usual budget constraints, financial resources

Key Insights:

Access to High-Quality Talent. Companies emphasize how the platform has allowed them to engage with skilled profiles that they wouldn't have been able to afford or reach through traditional means.

International & Diverse Teams. A strong appreciation emerges for the opportunity to build multicultural and cross-disciplinary teams. This diversity is seen as enriching and key to addressing global innovation challenges.

Efficient and Guided Onboarding. The process of posting roles, managing applications, and finalizing matches is described as clear and well-structured.

Support from the InnoNext team, particularly through direct contact, is highlighted as essential to a smooth experience.



Strategic Perspective. The internship is not seen as a temporary fix but as a step towards long-term capacity building, talent development, and international expansion.

4.4. Objective 4 - Increased visibility of EU funding programmes

Objective 4 is closely linked to Work Package 4 (WP4), which focuses on Communication and Dissemination. It is primarily through communication activities that the visibility of EU funding programmes can be increased.

As part of the promotion and dissemination of the InnoNext Initiative, a series of communication actions have been designed and are currently being implemented, including the goal of increasing awareness of European programmes and related funding opportunities.

S	Within the 24-month project period, achieve increased visibility of EU funding programmes among research talents (deep tech talents and aspiring innovators) through comprehensive communication and promotion activities, and linking to innovative but small companies such as SMEs and startups. This initiative aims to enhance the perception and understanding of EU-funded partner programmes among these entities, fostering greater participation and engagement and European leadership.
M	Attain a 20% increase in awareness and recognition of EU funding programmes by research talents and hosting companies compared to the baseline measurement. This will be measured through a pre-post survey. KPI4.1: +20% awareness of EU funding programmes KPI4.2: +20% appreciation of EU funding programmes This objective is also achieved through the following results: OA1 The InnoNext scheme OA2 Talents database OA3 Replication and upscaling toolkit
A	Implement tailored communication strategies and campaigns to effectively reach and inform research talents and hosting companies within the project's scope.
R	This objective supports the achievement of the call's expected outcome: E03 Increased visibility of EU funding programmes
T	It is achieved by WP4 " Promotion and Impact Assessment " from M4 to M21.

The actions undertaken can be summarised as follows:

Presentations within the EU innovation ecosystem

Table 14 – Overview of Events attended and organized between M9 and M12

Event	When	Hosted by	Description	Link
InnoNext InfoSession	12 th & 19 th May 2025	InnoNext	Two Webinars dedicated to InnoNext potential beneficiaries, one for the VTs and one for HCs.	InnoNext Resource Page , with the recorded webinars



Event	When	Hosted by	Description	Link
Online Webinar "InnoNext – Matching deep tech talent and companies for fully funded internships"	12 th June 2025	Swedish NCP	A webinar to present InnoNext Initiative to the ecosystem of a Swedish NCP, dedicated to beneficiaries from ERC, MSCA and RI.	website page link
Online Event "Cross border Doctoral Workshop 2025" - Round Table 'Why recruiting PhDs?' - 25-26 and 27 June	25 th June 2025	Universities of Lyon and Turin (Italy), University of Brescia (Italy) IIT (High Technological Institute) of Genova (Italy).	The cross-border Doctoral Workshop objective is to prepare the participants for their professional career outside Academia. It is a multicultural, multidisciplinary and bilingual (French – English) workshop that brings together doctoral students from the University of Turin, University of Brescia, the Western Swiss universities and the Université de Lyon. Practical workshops, job interviews simulations and meeting with company representatives await you.	

Press Release

One of the most high-impact actions carried out at the national level was **the publication of an article dedicated to InnoNext in *Il Sole 24 Ore***, Italy's leading financial and institutional newspaper. The article provided a concise yet valuable overview of the EU programmes involved, helping to raise visibility for the initiative and generate interest among stakeholders, potential beneficiaries, and actors within the innovation ecosystem. This result stands as a significant acknowledgment of the strategic value of the project and serves as a powerful communication lever within the Italian context. ([Link](#)). For a complete overview on press release activity see D4.2 – Report on Communication and Dissemination Actions

Creation of relevant content in the communication materials

The Communication include general posts and articles published on the events attended (e.g. EIC Summit 2025), through the official InnoNext and Consortium Partners channels.

Action performed



Table 15 – Action performed between M9 and M12

Action Performed	Relevant Output
Meeting with the InnoNext Network to present the Initiative	D3.1 – The InnoNext Scheme
Communication and Dissemination Plan Implementation	D4.1 – Communication and Dissemination Plan D4.2 - Report on Communication and Dissemination Action
Creation of a dedicated media kit for each EU PPs and for Key Stakeholders (NCPs)	
Press Release	
Mapping of key actors in the Italian and European innovation ecosystem	

Relevant indicators

The Indicators listed below are closely related to reach and inform talents and hosting companies during the implementation of the Initiative.

Indicator	M9	M12
Events in which the InnoNext Initiative has been presented	6	12
Articles published on EIC Community Platform;	2	3
Posts on EISMEA channels (LinkedIn & X);	2	2**
Articles published on the EIT Official Website	1	1**
Posts on EIT Channels (LinkedIn & X)	2	3**
InnoNext LinkedIn Posts	22	41
InnoNext X Posts	7	41
InnoNext Press Release	-	28

** Between M9 and M12 Media Kit for EU PPs has been created and periodically updated to facilitate the communication through Programmes Official Channels. The contents can be customized and adapted to the different channels including mailing, newsletters, LinkedIn, X and Articles. Each programme can disseminate the opportunities through official channels or personal contacts lists of EU PPs referents (e.g. in the case of EIT KICs).

5. Next Step

This section outlines a set of strategic actions planned to enhance the potential impact of the specific objective under analysis. These operational steps, identified based on the outcomes achieved and the qualitative feedback gathered, represent an initial level of planning and can be further detailed in future updates of the document.



Table 16 – Overview of the Next Step Identified by InnoNext Consortium

OBJ	Action	Description	KPI
OBJ1	A1.1	Continuous implementation and adaptation of the InnoNext Scheme	KPI1.1: 1 methodology; KPI1.2: 1 replication and upscaling toolkit;
	A1.2	Continuous revision of the InnoNext Kits (Agreement, Toolkit)	
	A1.3	Relaunch of both Calls of Interest	
	A1.4	<p>Improve Workshop Design and Impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement a pre-workshop communication plan highlighting the importance of completing questionnaires and using consistent email addresses to improve data tracking. Introduce more engaging formats (e.g., live polls, real-time check-ins) and tools to boost participation and track engagement effectively. 	
OBJ2	A2.1	Revision of the InnoNext Beneficiaries Journey on the Platform and eventual upgrade	<p>KPI2.3: $\geq 90\%$ top-5 accuracy of the matches proposed against manually selected options</p> <p>KPI2.4: the time required to join the InnoNext scheme through the platform: <10 min for both talents and companies</p>
	A2.2	Continuous development of the matchmaking process	<p>KPI2.1: 3000+ number of talents/businesses discovered</p> <p>KPI2.2: perform matches with internships in less than 1 second</p> <p>KPI2.3: $\geq 90\%$ top-5 accuracy of the matches proposed against manually selected options</p>
OBJ3	A3.1	<p>Enhance Talent Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiate follow-up communications with talents who haven't applied to any 	<p>KPI3.1: 600+ internships in 2 years</p> <p>KPI3.2: 150+ interns from EIC Pathfinder</p>



		<p>positions to understand barriers and stimulate engagement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch a structured feedback collection process from talents to better understand their experience and expectations. 	<p>KPI3.5: $\geq 50\%$ of the InnoNext budget allocated to support internships</p> <p>KPI3.6: Intern Satisfaction (on a Likert scale) at least 75% express 4 out of 5</p>
	A3.2	<p>Support Company Onboarding and Activation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send tailored email reminders to companies that have not completed their registration, encouraging them to upload the required documentation. • Distribute an updated and simplified user guide for hosting companies to clarify administrative procedures and platform use. 	<p>KPI3.1: 600+ internships in 2 years</p> <p>KPI3.3: 300+ deep tech internships</p> <p>KPI3.4: 300+ aspiring innovator internships</p> <p>KPI3.7: Company Satisfaction (on a Likert scale) at least 75% express 4 out of 5</p>
	A3.3	<p>Optimize Vacancy Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze successful vacancy postings to extract common elements and format best practice examples for future postings. • Engage inactive companies to investigate the reasons for non-engagement and provide targeted support or clarification where needed. 	<p>KPI3.3: 300+ deep tech internships</p> <p>KPI3.4: 300+ aspiring innovator internships</p> <p>KPI3.6: Intern Satisfaction (on a Likert scale) at least 75% express 4 out of 5</p> <p>KPI3.7: Company Satisfaction (on a Likert scale) at least 75% express 4 out of 5</p>
	A3.4	<p>Increase Visibility of the InnoNext Initiative through the official InnoNext Channels and through the active support of the EU Programmes</p>	<p>KPI3.1: 600+ internships in 2 years</p> <p>KPI3.2: 150+ interns from EIC Pathfinder</p> <p>KPI3.5: $\geq 50\%$ of the InnoNext budget allocated to support internships</p>
	A3.5	<p>Strengthening Stakeholder Engagement and the InnoNext networks with the aim to disseminate the opportunity through different channels</p>	<p>KPI3.1: 600+ internships in 2 years</p> <p>KPI3.2: 150+ interns from EIC Pathfinder</p>



			KPI3.5: $\geq 50\%$ of the InnoNext budget allocated to support internships
OBJ4	A4.1	Participation in sectorial Events of EU Innovation Ecosystem with the aim to present InnoNext and its opportunities.	KPI4.1: +20% awareness of EU funding programmes KPI4.2: +20% appreciation of EU funding programmes



6. Annexes

6.1. Annex 1 – Monitoring Meeting Slide



The slide features a title, an agenda list, and a decorative graphic of colored bars in the top right corner. The agenda items are: 1. InnoNext key points, 2. InnoNext main developments, 3. Save the dates & Promotion, 4. Challenges, and 5. QA. The slide number '2' is located in the bottom right corner.

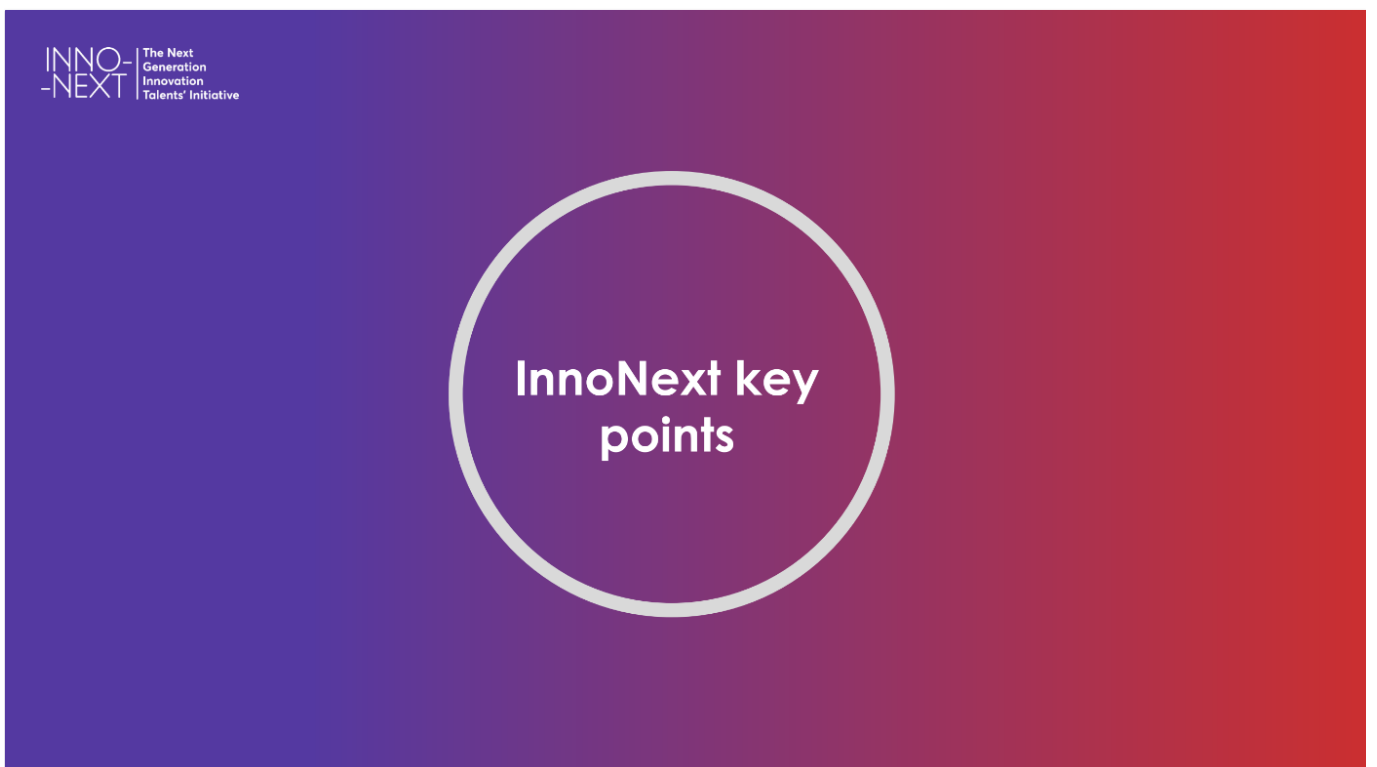
Welcome to the InnoNext Monitoring Meeting

Agenda

1. InnoNext key points
2. InnoNext main developments
3. Save the dates & Promotion
4. Challenges
5. QA

INNO-
-NEXT | The Next
Generation
Innovation
Talents' Initiative

2



The slide has a purple-to-red gradient background. It features the InnoNext logo in the top left and a large white circle in the center containing the text 'InnoNext key points'.

INNO-
-NEXT | The Next
Generation
Innovation
Talents' Initiative

InnoNext key points



Value proposition

InnoNext is an EU-funded initiative connecting researchers and professionals with innovative companies

Creating opportunities to collaborate and develop entrepreneurial skills

Boosting innovation in companies

In collaboration with
EIC, EIT, ERC, MSCA, RI



InnoNext beneficiaries

Visiting Talents

EIC:

- **Pathfinder** PhD/Postdoc researchers
- **Transition** Researchers

EIT:

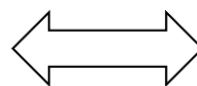
- **Label programmes** students/alumni
- **KIC education** participants

MSCA:

- **Postdoc Fellows** participants
- **Doctoral Networks** participants
- **COFUND** participants

ERC PhD/Postdoc researchers

RI PhD/Postdoc researchers



Innovation Internships:

- Advance technologies
- Boost exploitations

Hosting Companies

EIC:

- Supported by **EIC Pathfinder**
- Supported by **EIC Transition**
- Supported by **EIC Accelerator**
- Awarded by **EIC Seal of excellence**

EIT:

- Supported by **EIT Community**
- Created as a result of / receiving support from **KICs**
- Have been partners of **KICs** for Innovation activities
- With at least one co-founder who is an **EIT Alumni** member



Two types of innovation internships

Deep Tech Talents

- Technology-focused experiences
- Technical innovation projects

Aspiring Innovators

- Business-focused experiences
- Entrepreneurship skills development

Why InnoNext for Hosting Companies?

Boost innovation by hosting a highly skilled talent

Strengthen the technology performance for better competing in a challenging market

Access to new ideas

Train talents with hands on experiences on company sustainability

Receive mentor support



Why InnoNext for Visiting Talents?

Gain practical experience collaborating with startups and SMEs

Apply academic skills in the entrepreneurial world

From exploration to exploitation

Develop entrepreneurial skills

Receive expert mentoring

Key Dates

InnoNext end:

EIT beneficiaries: **December 2025**
Others: **July 2026**

Internship Duration: 3-6 months

Applications: Rolling basis

Start Dates: Flexible



Financial Support (to talents only)

Funding varies by program:

MSCA: Covered by the originating project

RI: Personnel costs covered by the originating project

EIC Pathfinder: 2.300 € gross/month (>150 km)

ERC: PhD students: 4,300 € gross/month
postdocs: 5,300 € gross/month

EIT: 2000€ gross/month
+750 € one-time mobility allowance

Covered by InnoNext funding

Max 3 months

3 - 6 months

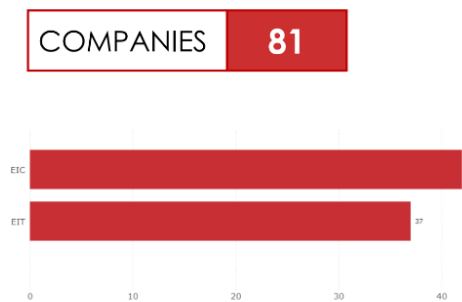
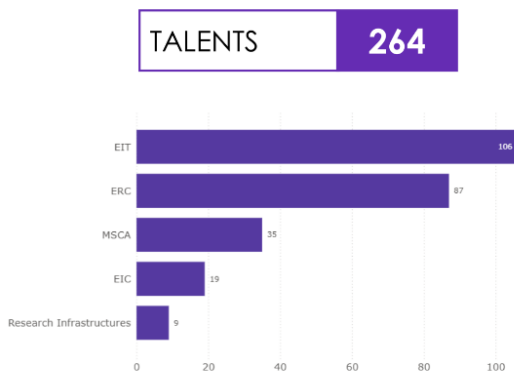
InnoNext main
developments



Launch of InnoNext for beneficiaries

EIC, ERC, MSCA, RI	Dec 2024
EIT	April 2025

Growing community of beneficiaries (as of now)



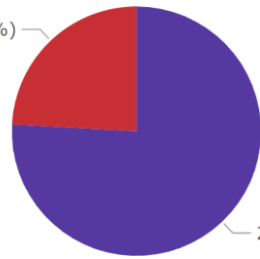


Innovation Internship opportunities (as of now)

OPPORTUNITIES **29**

Aspiring Innovators

7 (24,14%)



Deep Tech Talents
22 (75,86%)

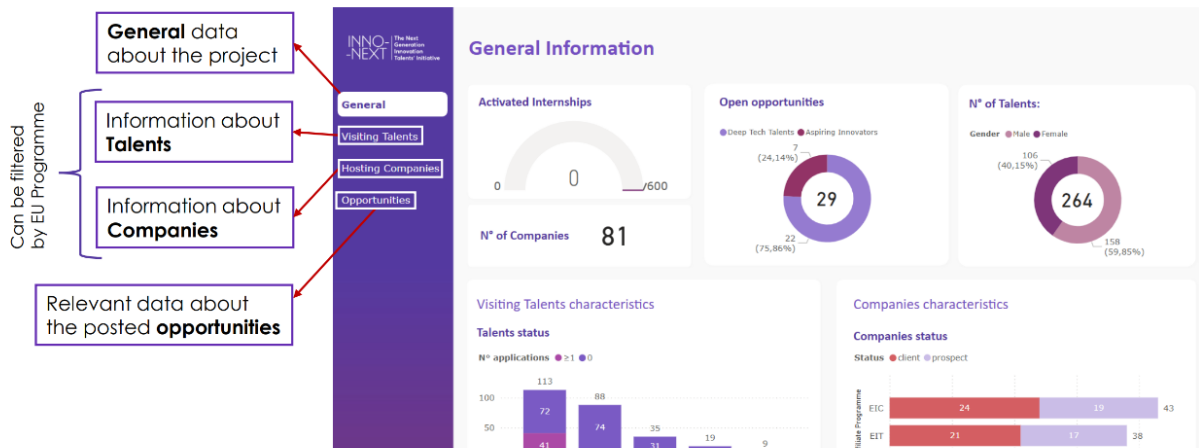
How classification is done:

- **Machine Learning model**
- **Sentence embeddings** (numerical representations of text)
- **Support Vector Machine** to detect **complex non-linear patterns** to assign each job to one of two categories.

The **model was trained** using 2,000 example sentences (generated with GPT-4o starting from the opportunities published on InnoNext)

Dashboard

Access: tinyurl.com/innonext-dashboard





Applicant tracking & matchmaking system

Applicant tracking

- Web application to record visiting talents and hosting companies
- SOTA: seamless integrated with the InnoNext landing page

Matchmaking

- Web service to match talent profiles with position descriptions
- SOTA: under final tests. So far, the matches done have been computed with a simplified algorithm that computed the intersection of competences from talents and positions. Notifications have been sent manually

Landing page

Home Page Optimization

- Redesign for improved user engagement
- CTAs for time-sensitive opportunities (EIC Summit + Info Sessions)

New Mentoring Section in Development:

- Password-protected
- Access to mentoring content
- Post-produced webinar recordings

Ongoing Improvements:

- Converting to more visual/graphic formats
- Optimizing page structures
- Real-time database integration for automatic updates of statistics and metrics



Agreement toolkits

Visiting Talents

- Declaration of Honor
- Innovation Internship Agreement
- Financial Agreement (a dedicated template to talent from EIC Pathfinder, EIT and ERC)

Hosting Companies

- Letter of Commitment (which contain Innovation Internship Agreement)

The **Innovation Internship Agreement Template** can be complemented by Hosting Company and Visiting Talent. **It also includes IP management**

BEST PRACTICES GUIDELINES

A non-legal document which clarifies roles and responsibilities of the parties involved (VT, HC & InnoNext)

Save the dates
& Promotion



Info sessions

May 12th – Visiting Talents

Total number of registrants	307
Number of attendees	162
Total number of attendees at the start	126
Total number of attendees at the end	121
Total number of questions received during the webinar	50
Number of questions addressed live	33



Affiliate Program	Hosting Companies	Visiting Talents	Total
EIC Accelerator (including H2020 SME instrument)	35		35
EIC Pathfinder	2	15	17
EIC Seal of Excellence	3		3
EIC Transition	1	2	3
EIT Alumni member	35	35	70
EIT Community		33	33
EIT Community and business creation services	31		31
EIT Label Masters and Doctoral programmes		181	181
ERC		15	15
MSCA COFUND		1	1
MSCA Doctoral Network		2	2
MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships		15	15
Partners of KICs for Innovation activities	10		10
Receiving support from KICs	21		21
Research Infrastructures		8	8
Total	138	307	445

Next webinar: May 19th, dedicated to HC. A total of **138 companies** registered as of today.

Total interest between VT and HC as of today:

20

445 individuals and legal entities.

Workshop mentoring

Subject	Date	In progress *
Cultivating an Entrepreneurial Mindset	May 30th , 14:00 – 17:00	
Lean Startup & Agile Principles	July 4th , 14:00 – 17:00	
Product Development	September 4th , 14:00 – 17:00	
Growth & Scalability Strategies	November 4th , 10:00 – 13:00	

*The webinars are open to whole InnoNext community; all eligible Talents and Companies can participate. For each webinar, an invitation is sent to them with the relevant details.

The webinars are held live, and after post-production, they are uploaded to the Mentoring section of the website, which is accessible with a dedicated password provided to the InnoNext network.



21

Media kits tailored for any program (1)

n.1 Media Kit for each program

The folder contains a specific kit for each specific declination where there are internal program differentiations (e.g. EIC)

Download from the [Media Kit Page](#)



Media kits tailored for any program (2)

Each folder contains

n.1 editable word document with the main information to be used for communication.

Dissemination Channels:

- Mailing List

The contents can be used also as LinkedIn posts

A **Summary** for the most complex files

Editable Visual Contents

on Canva:
n.1 Flyers
n.3 Banners in different sizes
n.1 Graphic material for LinkedIn/X

Editable Visual Content	1
Mail Template – Talents + Companies	1
Mail Template – Talents	1
Mail Template – Companies	1

Editable Visual Content	
Canva Flyer	A different Flyer for companies and talents
Banner (6912x3456px)	Banner for LinkedIn, Mail, X
Banner (3840x393px)	Banner for Newsletter/Mail Header
Banner (2480x600px)	Banner for Mail, Newsletter
LinkedIn Posts	Different Post for LinkedIn and X

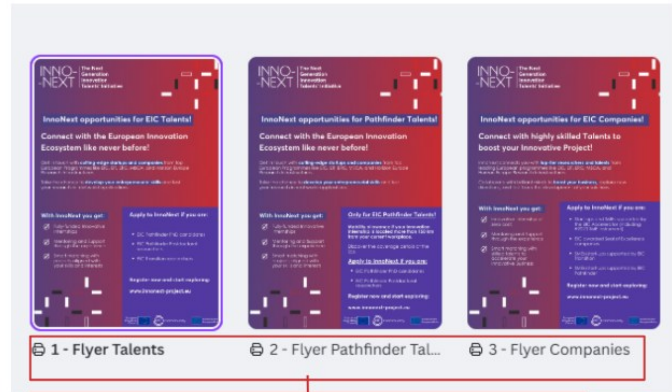
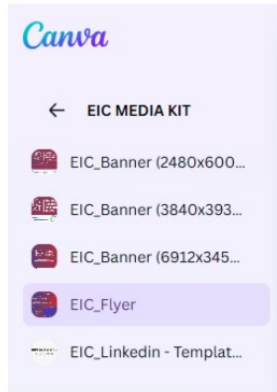




Media kits tailored for any program (3)



Canva
Editable Visual
Content



1 - Flyer Talents 2 - Flyer Pathfinder Tal... 3 - Flyer Companies

Visuals are named to facilitate the identification of the most suitable one for the target they address

Challenges



Main challenges (so far)

Activation of Internships **0**

Limited interest from SMEs **81 registered companies vs 264 talents**

Scant internship opportunities published

29 opportunities published

19 companies have published an opportunity

Feedback from companies about InnoNext

Positive: access to talents with experience in European projects/programmes cost-free is perceived as very attractive, however:

Negatives:

- Companies highlight the need to consider the **time** required to train and onboard even highly skilled Talent on the project/entrepreneurial activity in which will be inserted
- Start-ups with **small structures** may find it difficult to manage the Talent onboard effectively, especially if they do not have dedicated resources
- Start-ups face the problem of learning how to delegate tasks to unknown interns who will work together for a short timeframe
- Project proposal did not included to participate to InnoNext, seen as a duty rather than an opportunity

This information was collected during the EIC Summit through direct meetings with startups and local stakeholders.



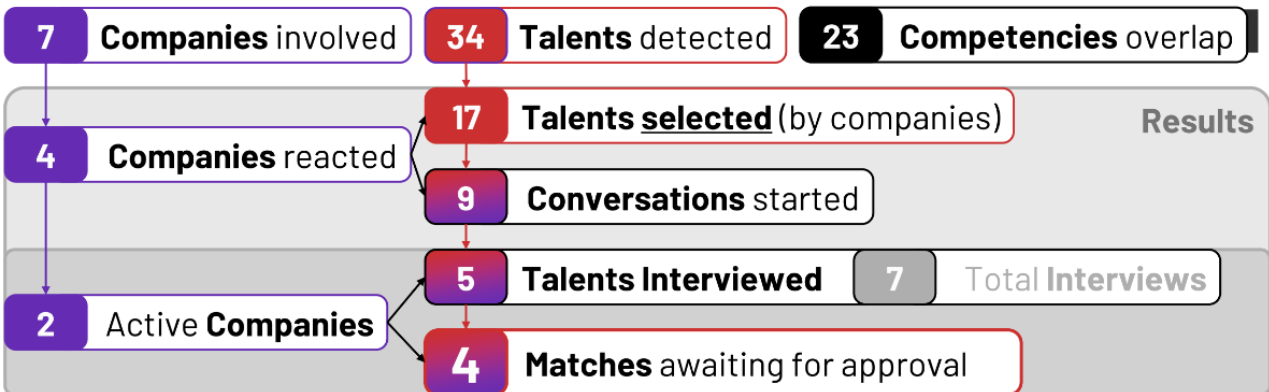
Other challenges

Long funneling

DoH requires time to be uploaded (if done)

InnoNext training not conceived in the original project in which the talent is working

Long funneling (example on April)





Cherry-picked some feedback from companies about the funneling

Matches	Timing	Interviews
Technically not suitable for critical activities per CTO assessment	Companies Need clarity on candidate availability for commitments	Multiple interview rounds being conducted (initial + technical/department specific)
Candidate Declined due to concerns about situation in Israel (before interviews - company has office in Israel)	Start date alignment between companies and talents	Flexibility in interview scheduling to accommodate both parties
Distant topics from PhD objective and company (before interviews)	Time of discussion between Talent and Supervisor	Companies actively engaging in evaluation of multiple candidates simultaneously

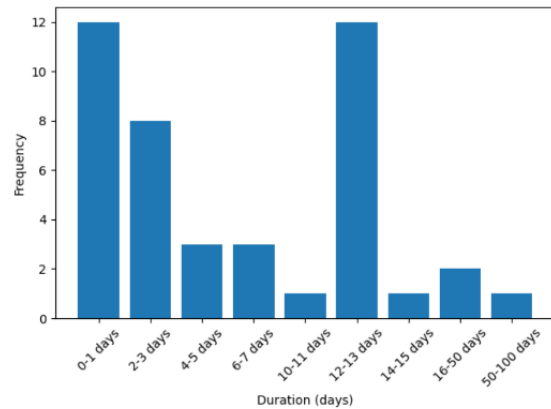
Average DoH Upload Time

Analysis of how long it takes for a Talent to upload their Declaration of Honor (DoH) after applying to a job post.

Key Metrics:

- **Average Time:** 9 days, 7 hours, and 43 minutes
- **Minimum Time:** 23 hours
- **Maximum Time:** 93 days

53 talents have applied without having had uploaded any DoH so far





Cheery-picked feedbacks from project coordinators/PIs

Scheme & originating project fit

Difficult to modify the training activities of a talent after a project has been funded (can InnoNext be used at proposal stage?)

For future funded projects, those that will be conceived now, their begin will happen after that InnoNext ends

Feedback from visiting talents about InnoNext

Challenges

Confusion regarding the **eligibility** criteria for certain programs

Visa and **relocation** complications

Internships **aligning** effectively with **PhD research objectives**

Concerns

Balance program expectations with **academic responsibilities**

Technical difficulties reported with uploading mandatory documents

Delays in **employer** approvals for the **DoH**



6.2. Annex 3 - Database of Q&A form beneficiaries collected through the Communication Channels

The database is an **internal tool** to monitor and track the inquiries from the potential beneficiaries and the applicants. The scope of the tool is to collect and cluster the recurrent questions to standardize and assure quality in the answers flow and activate the specialist of each section of the InnoNext Initiative (Technical, AI, Administrative, FSTP experts, etc..).

Moreover, the systematic collection of the beneficiaries' feedbacks is an important element to determine and guide the strategic approach through the iterative process of the InnoNext Scheme shape.

#	Questions	Date	Channel	Writer rol	Program	Topic
3	Hello, We are considering signing up as a hosting company for the program. However, the optimal time for the intern would be 6-12 months from now. Would it make the most sense to sign up now or to wait? Is there an end to the program or does it continue until the funds run out?	30.01.25	Email	Company	-	Application period
11	Hi there, Our company, received a Seal of Excellence some years ago for a project. This project has not proceeded or been funded by another organisation. Can I please check if we would be eligible to apply for an alternative project to that of the project we received the Seal of Excellence for. Or does is it only for the specific project that the seal of excellence was received for? Many thanks Fiona	23/01/25	Email	Company	SOE	Elegibility of expired grants SoE
27	Participation process: What specific documents or requirements are necessary for registration and		Email	company		application



6.3. Annex 3 – Pre Internship Survey Overview

VTs Pre Internship Survey

How did you find out about the InnoNext initiative?

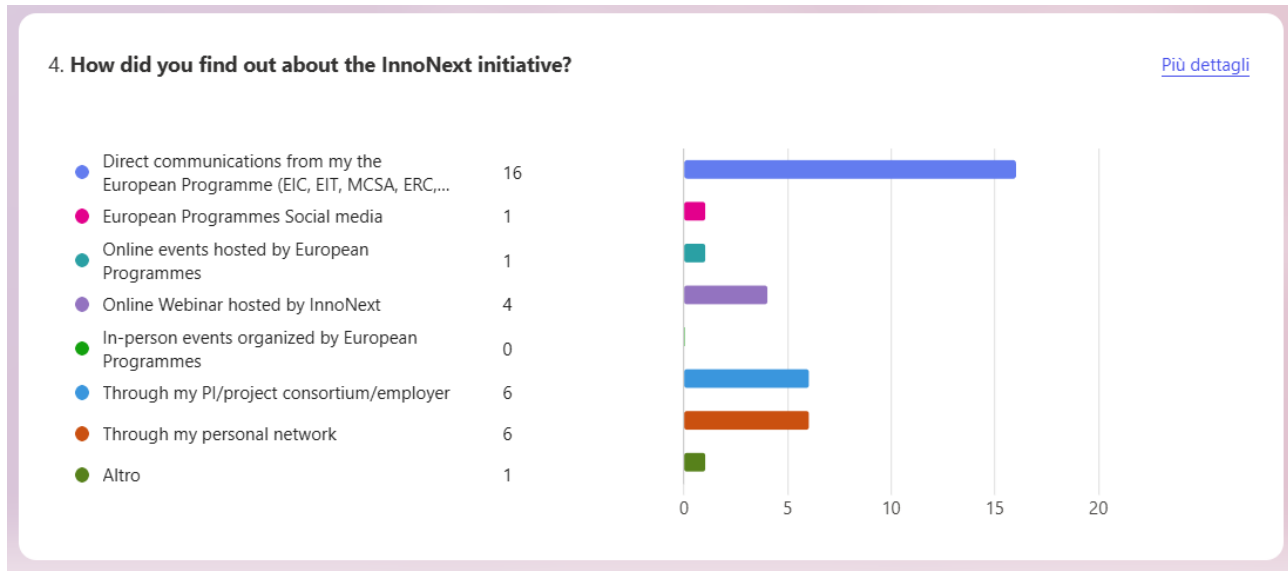


Figure 33 - Talent Pre-Internship Survey (July 2025)

- Direct outreach from **EU PPs is the dominant communication channel**, accounting for nearly half of the responses. This highlights the importance of formal communication from trusted institutional sources in driving participation.
- Personal networks and **PI/project consortium referrals also play a significant role**, showing that word-of-mouth and internal project communication are key for recruitment.
- InnoNext-hosted webinars and online events/social media contribute to awareness but are secondary compared to direct communications.
- LinkedIn was mentioned only once, suggesting low engagement through general social media channels, or underreporting in this survey.



What led you to participate in the InnoNext initiative and apply for an internship?

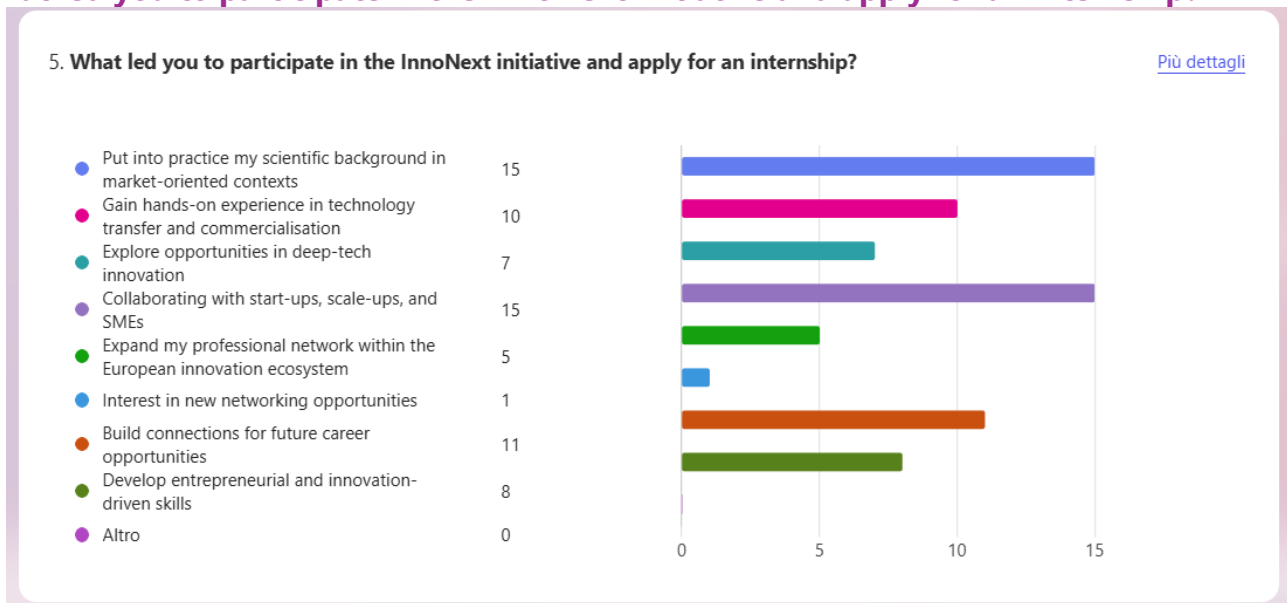


Figure 34 - Talent Pre-Internship Survey (July 2025)

- The top motivation is to apply scientific knowledge in practical, market-oriented settings. This highlights the talents' desire to bridge research with real-world innovation.
- There is a strong interest in collaborating with start-ups, scale-ups, and SMEs, reflecting a focus on working within dynamic and agile environments.
- Career development (building connections and gaining hands-on experience) is a clear driver, showing that participants see InnoNext as a stepping stone for future professional growth.
- Deep-tech innovation and entrepreneurial skills development are important but secondary motivations, suggesting participants are also open to exploring new sectors and expanding their innovation mindset.
- Networking specifically within the European innovation ecosystem is less frequent but still mentioned, signaling that cross-border collaboration is valued.



Have you ever considered starting your own business project?

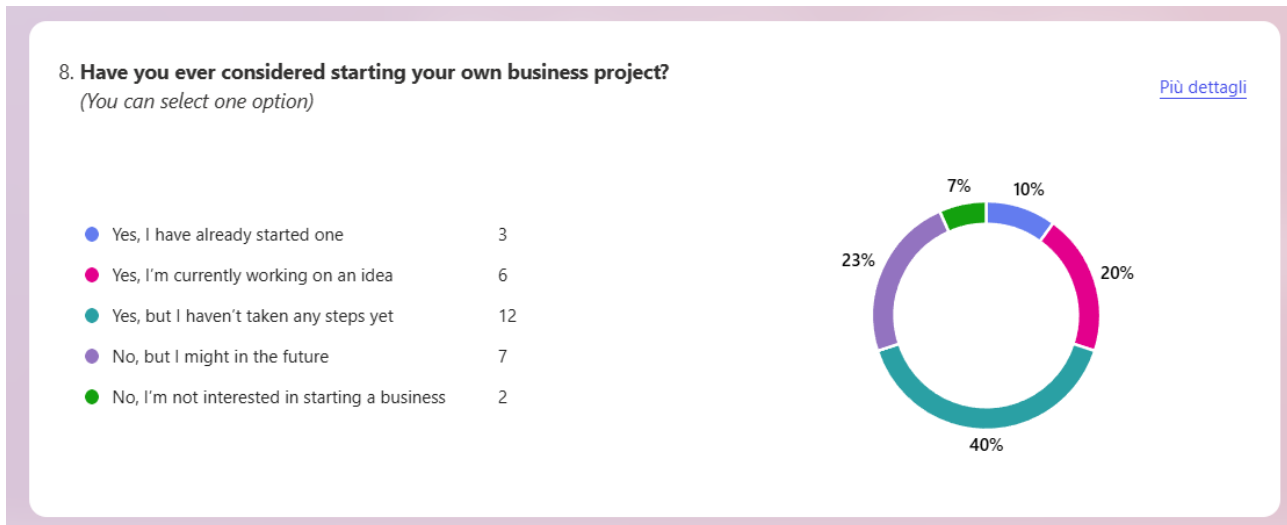


Figure 35 -Talent Pre-Internship Survey (July 2025)

- 71% of participants (20 out of 28) have either already started, are currently developing, or are considering starting a business in the future.
- 43% (12 respondents) have thought about starting a business but haven't taken action yet, suggesting potential for entrepreneurship training or mentoring.
- 18% (5 respondents) are actively working on a startup idea.
- A small percentage (2 respondents) are not interested in entrepreneurship, while 6 are open to the idea in the future.



How did you find the Registration form?

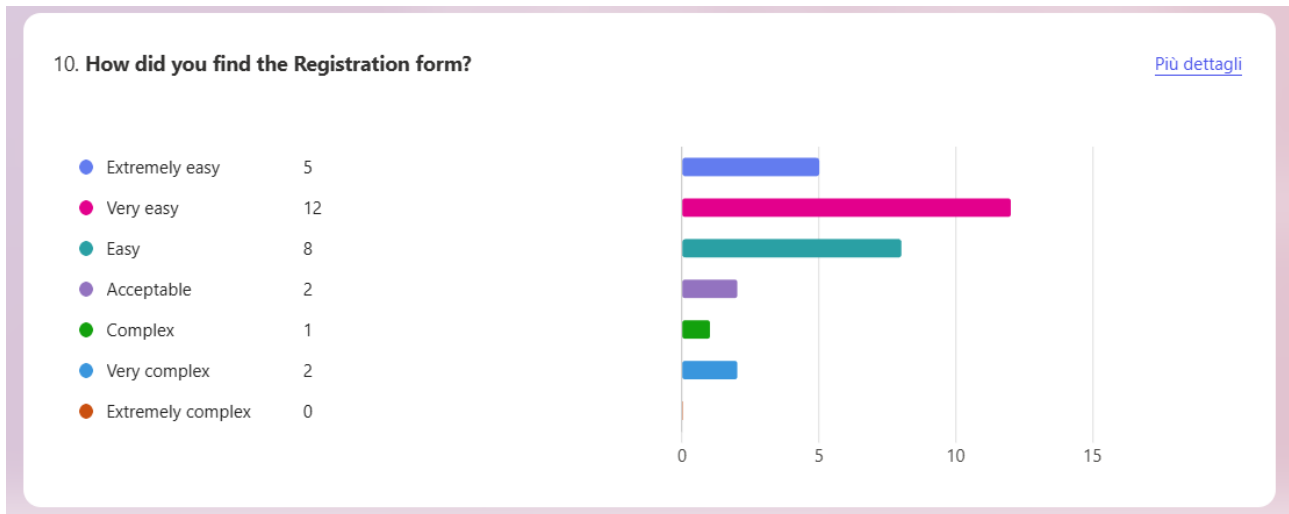


Figure 36 - Talent Pre-Internship Survey (July 2025)

- 64% (18 out of 28) found the registration form "Very easy" or "Extremely easy".
- 29% (8 respondents) rated it as "Easy", indicating a generally smooth process.
- 2 respondents found it "Acceptable", and 2 respondents found it "Very complex", suggesting minor usability issues for a small subset.

How was it to integrate the additional information requested during the application (Declaration of honour (DoH), certifications/engagement letters)?

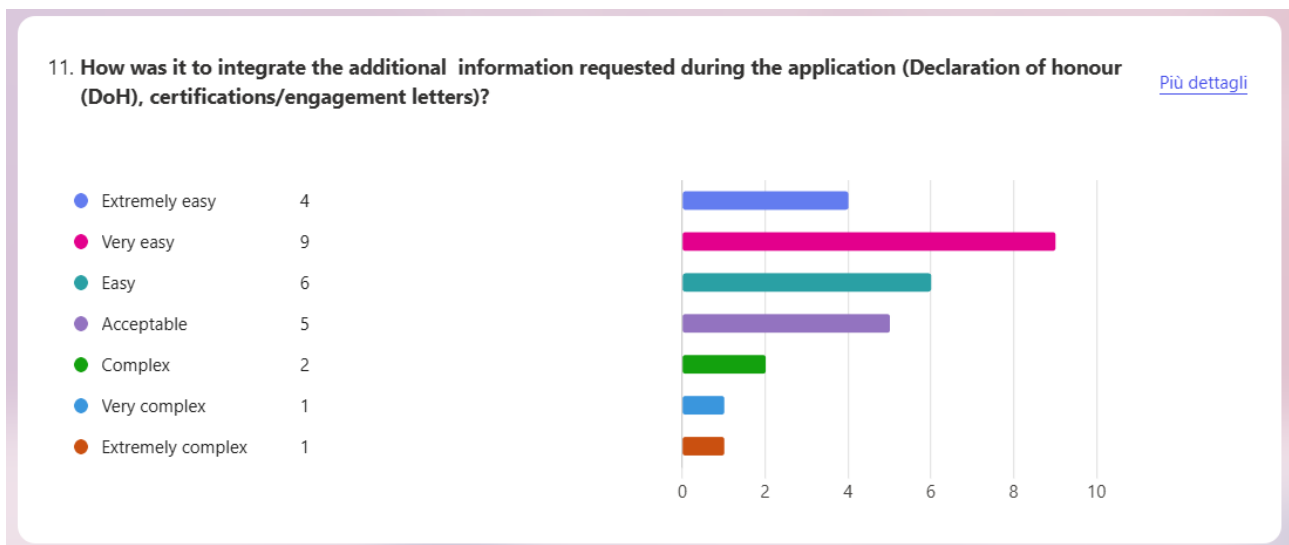


Figure 37 - Talent Pre-Internship Survey (July 2025)

- 68% (19 out of 28) found the process "Easy", "Very easy", or "Extremely easy".
- 18% (5 respondents) rated it as "Acceptable", suggesting mild challenges.
- 14% (4 respondents) found it "Complex", "Very complex", or "Extremely complex", highlighting potential friction points in documentation upload and form integration.



How is the process and all the steps leading to the internship?

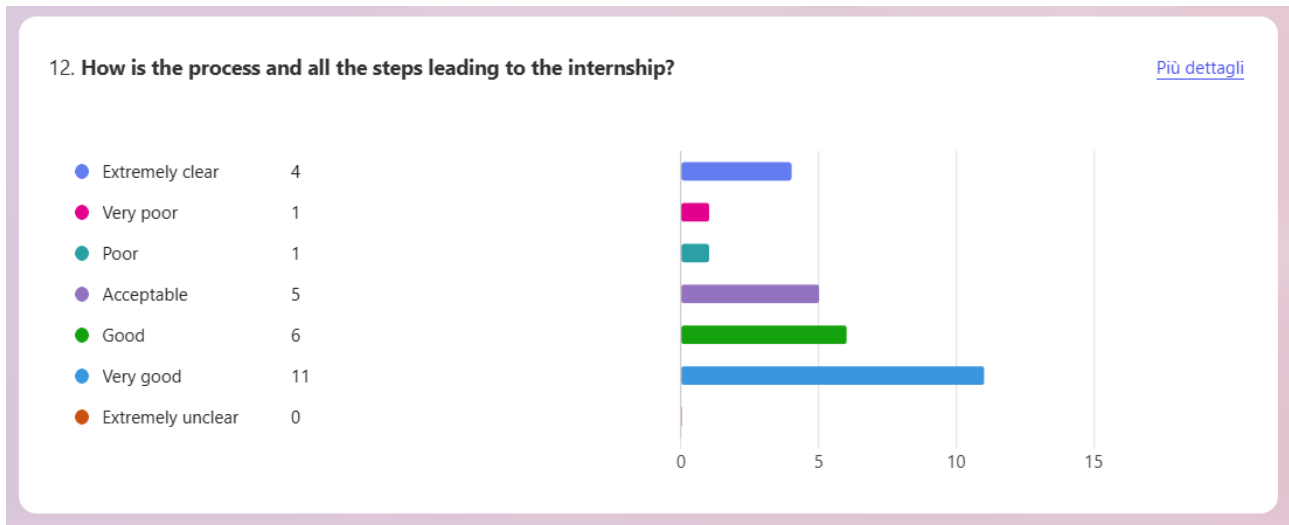


Figure 38 - Talent Pre-Internship Survey (July 2025)

- 79% (22 out of 28) rated the process as "Extremely clear", "Very good", or "Good", reflecting an overall positive perception of the process leading up to the internship.
- 18% (5 respondents) found the process "Acceptable", indicating there is room for improvement, but no critical issues.
- 7% (2 respondents) reported "Poor" or "Very poor", suggesting isolated cases of significant dissatisfaction.

Which of the following content/sections are more interesting/useful for you?

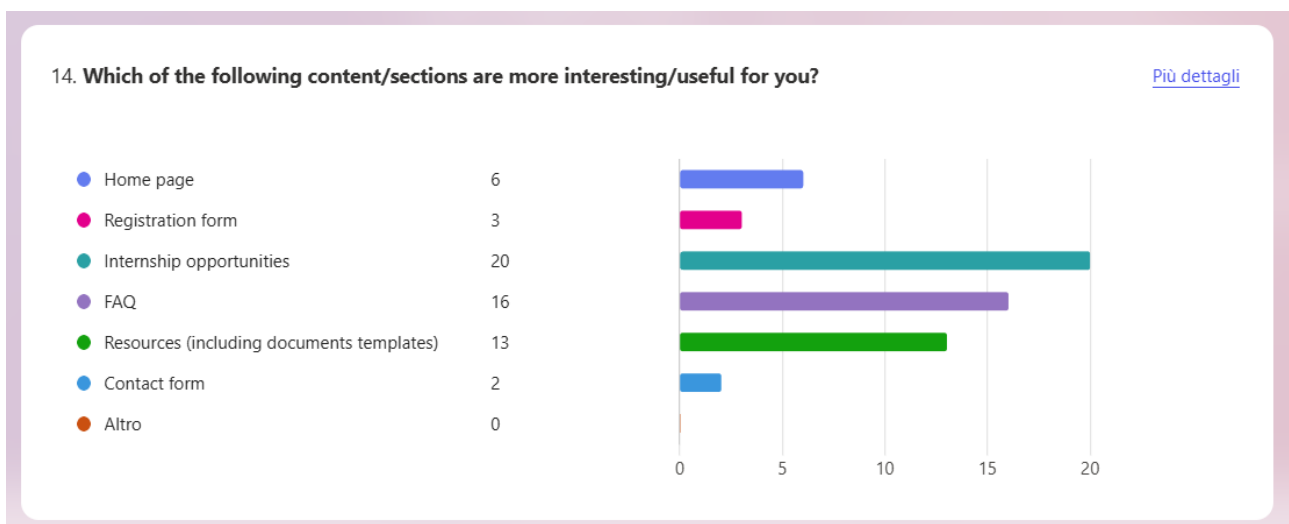


Figure 39 - Talent Pre-Internship Survey (July 2025)

- The Internship opportunities section was the most accessed, mentioned by 79% of respondents.
- The FAQ and Resources sections were also heavily used, confirming their importance in supporting participants.



- The Home page and Registration form had moderate use.
- The Contact form was rarely used, possibly indicating that most participants found the answers they needed through the other sections.

In case you contacted the InnoNext team, which channels have you used?

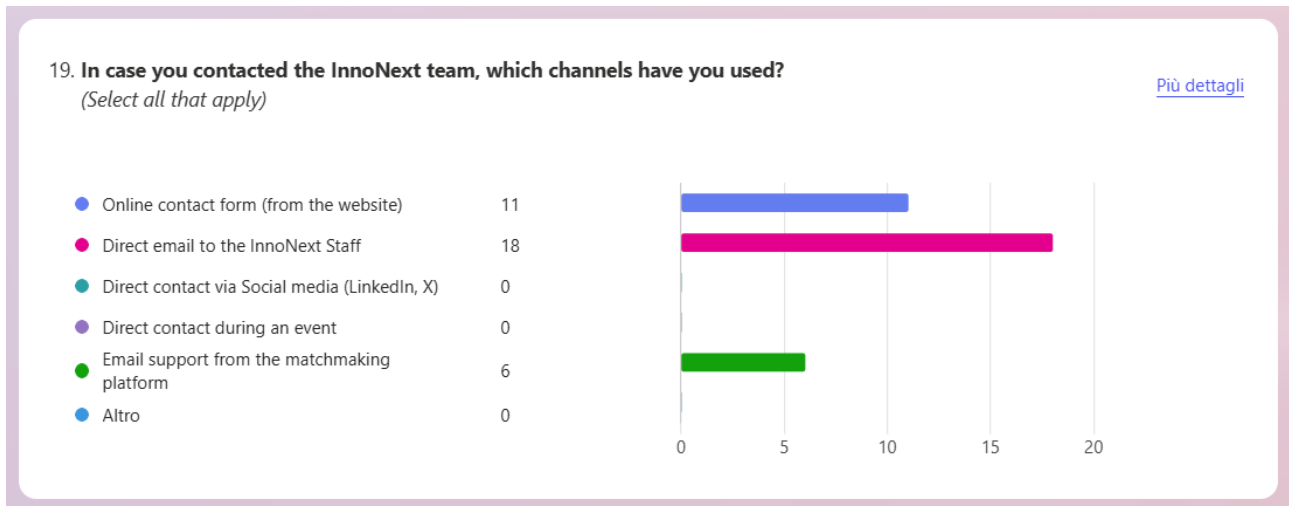


Figure 40 - Talent Pre-Internship Survey (July 2025)

- The Direct email to the InnoNext Staff was the most frequently used support channel, mentioned by 75% of respondents.
- The Online contact form was also widely used, with 54% of respondents mentioning it.
- The Email support via the matchmaking platform was used less frequently, indicating that participants may have preferred direct or website-based communication.

Overall, how would you rate the support you received from our team?

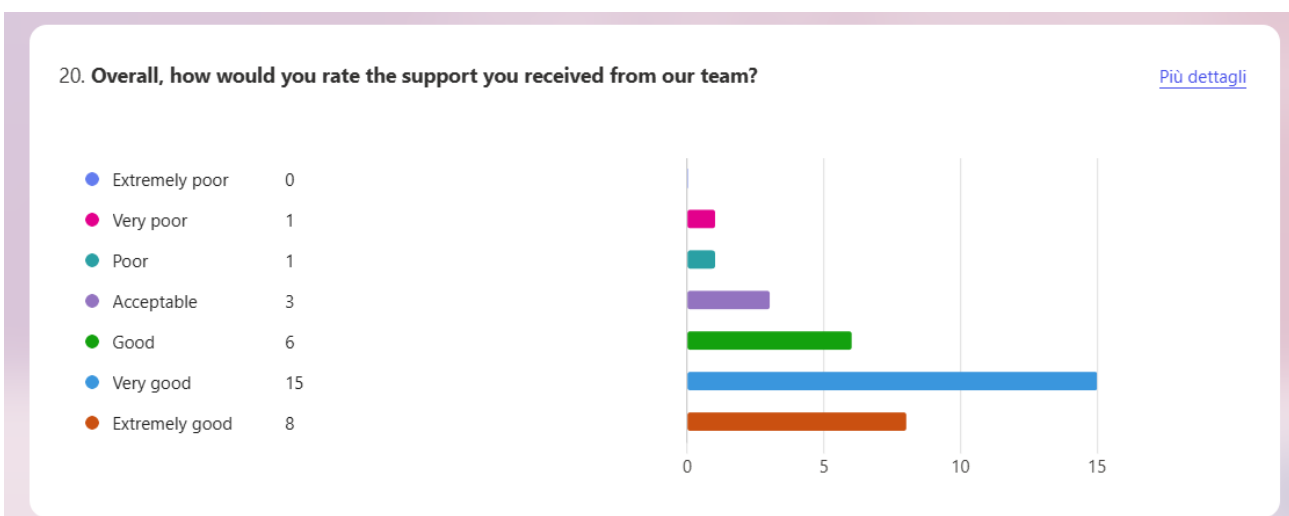


Figure 41 - Talent Pre-Internship Survey (July 2025)

- 68% of respondents (19 out of 28) rated the support as "Very good" or "Extremely good."



- 14% found the support just acceptable.
- Only 2 respondents (7%) reported a poor or very poor experience, suggesting isolated dissatisfaction.

HCs Pre Internship Survey

How did you find out about the InnoNext initiative?

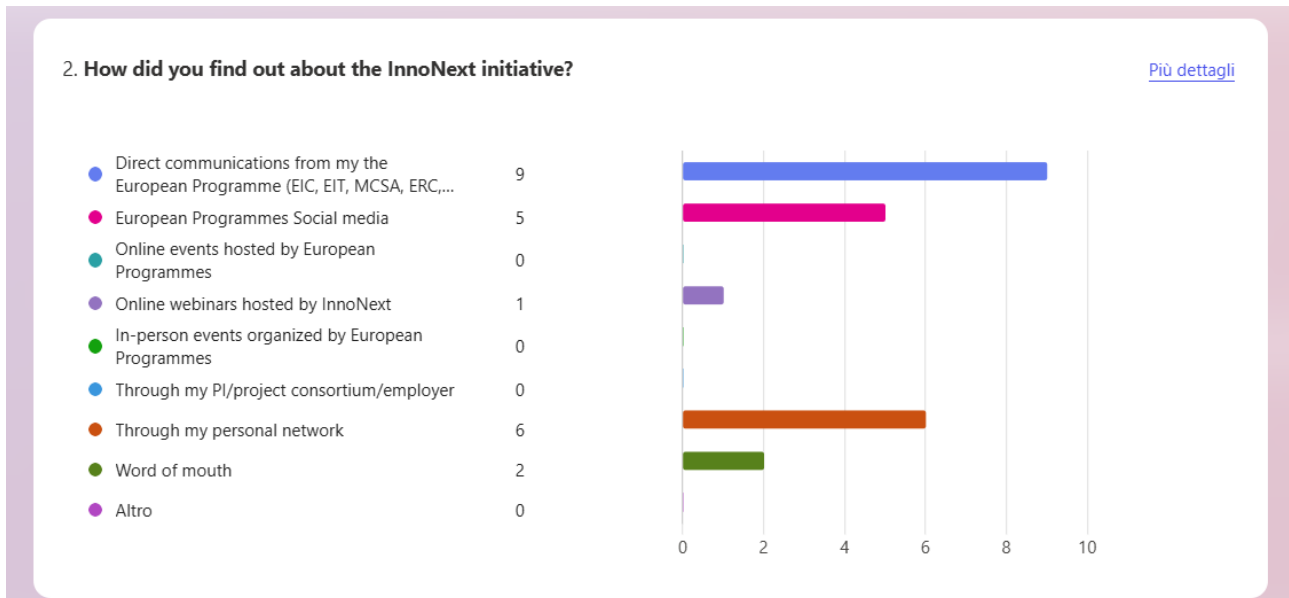


Figure 42 - Company Pre-Internship Survey (July 2025)

- The majority of companies (9 out of 20) discovered InnoNext through direct communications from European programmes (EIC, EIT, MCSA, ERC, etc.).
- European Programmes' social media channels and personal networks / word of mouth were each mentioned by 5 companies.
- Only 1 company mentioned InnoNext-hosted webinars as the source of information.



What led you to participate in the InnoNext initiative?

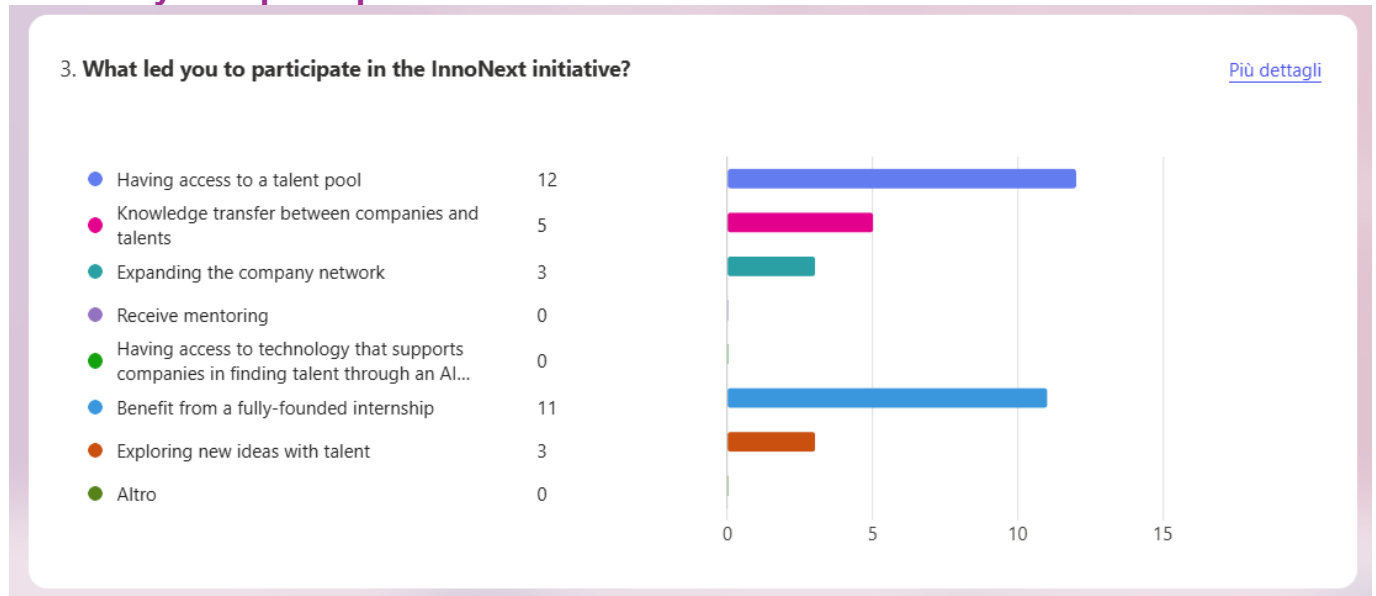


Figure 43 - Company Pre-Internship Survey (July 2025)

- The main motivation for companies was access to a talent pool (65%).
- Fully-funded internships were also highly attractive, mentioned by 60% of the companies.
- Knowledge transfer was a significant reason for 30% of respondents.
- Expanding networks and exploring new ideas were secondary motivations but still relevant.

In which areas do you feel most lacking but consider essential to have support?

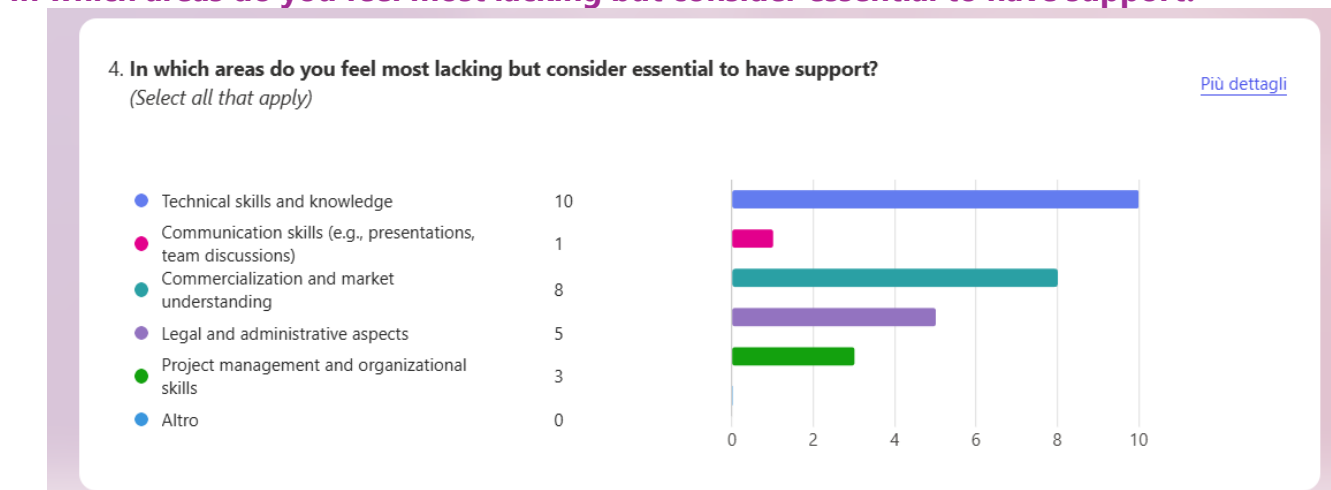


Figure 44 - Company Pre-Internship Survey (July 2025)

- Technical skills and knowledge are the most commonly identified gap, mentioned by 50% of the companies.
- Commercialization and market understanding is also a major concern for 40% of respondents.



- Legal, administrative, and project management skills were less frequently mentioned but still relevant.
- Communication skills were only mentioned once but could represent an overlooked area.

How did you find the Registration form?

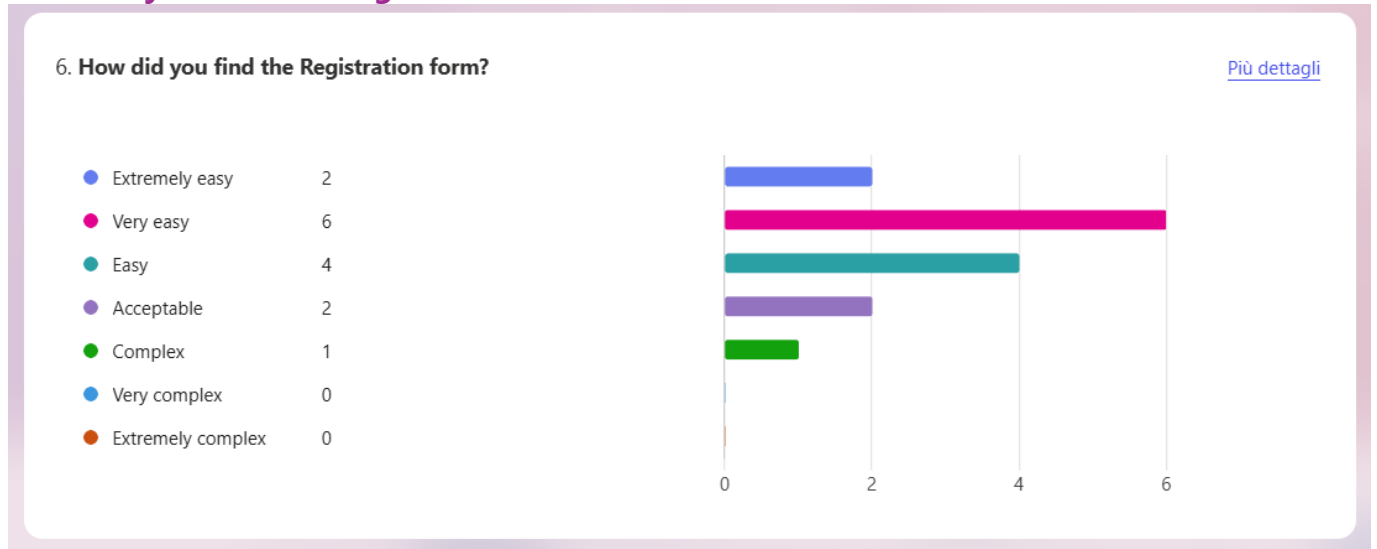


Figure 45 - Company Pre-Internship Survey (July 2025)

- 80% of respondents (12 out of 15) found the registration form Easy to Extremely Easy.
- Only 1 respondent found it Complex, and 2 found it Acceptable, indicating that while the majority had a smooth experience, there's minor room for simplification or additional guidance for outliers.

How was it to integrate the additional information requested during the application (Letter of Commitment (LoC), certifications/engagement letters)?

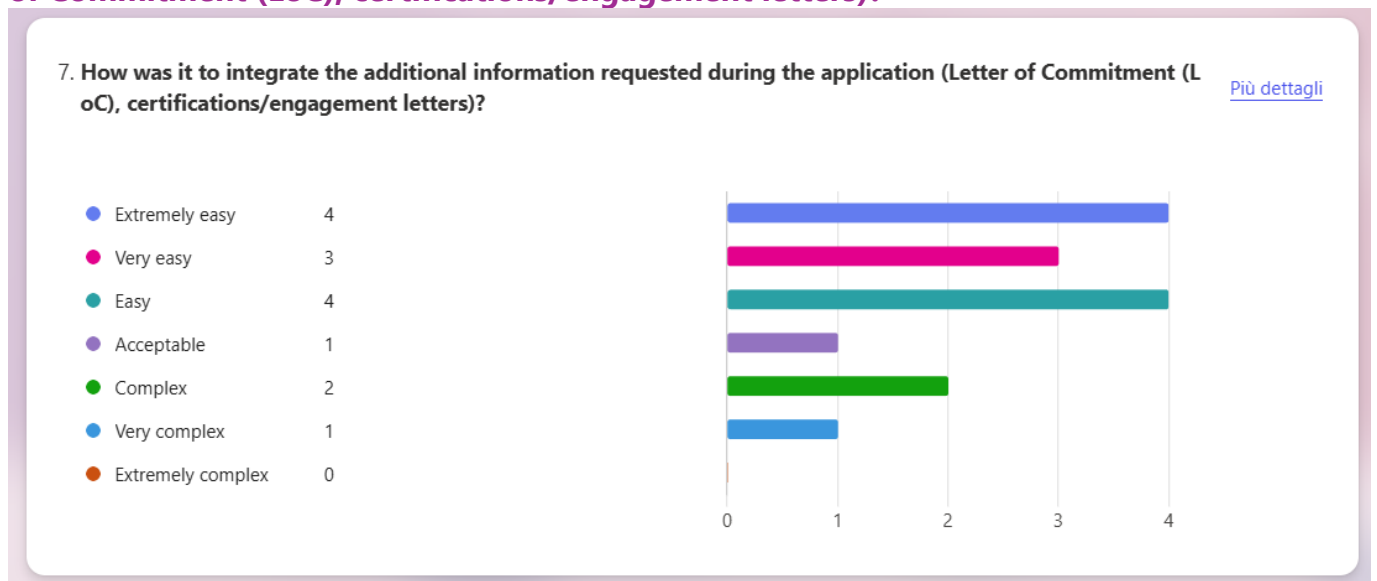


Figure 46 - Company Pre-Internship Survey (July 2025)



- 80% of respondents (12 out of 15) found the process Easy to Extremely Easy.
- 20% (3 out of 15) encountered difficulties, labeling it Acceptable, Complex, or Very Complex

How is the process and all the steps leading to the internship?

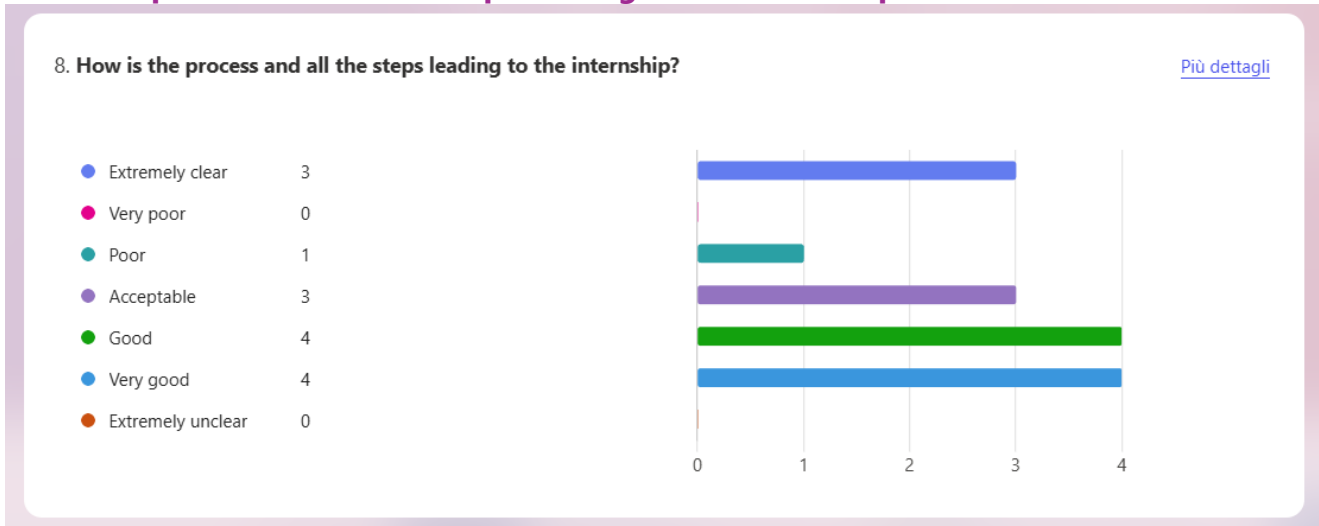


Figure 47 - Company Pre-Internship Survey (July 2025)

- 73% of respondents (11 out of 15) rated the process as Good to Extremely Clear.
- 20% (3 out of 15) found it Acceptable, suggesting there is room for improvement.
- 1 respondent (7%) reported it as Poor, indicating a need to investigate specific pain points.

Which of the following content/sections are more useful for you?

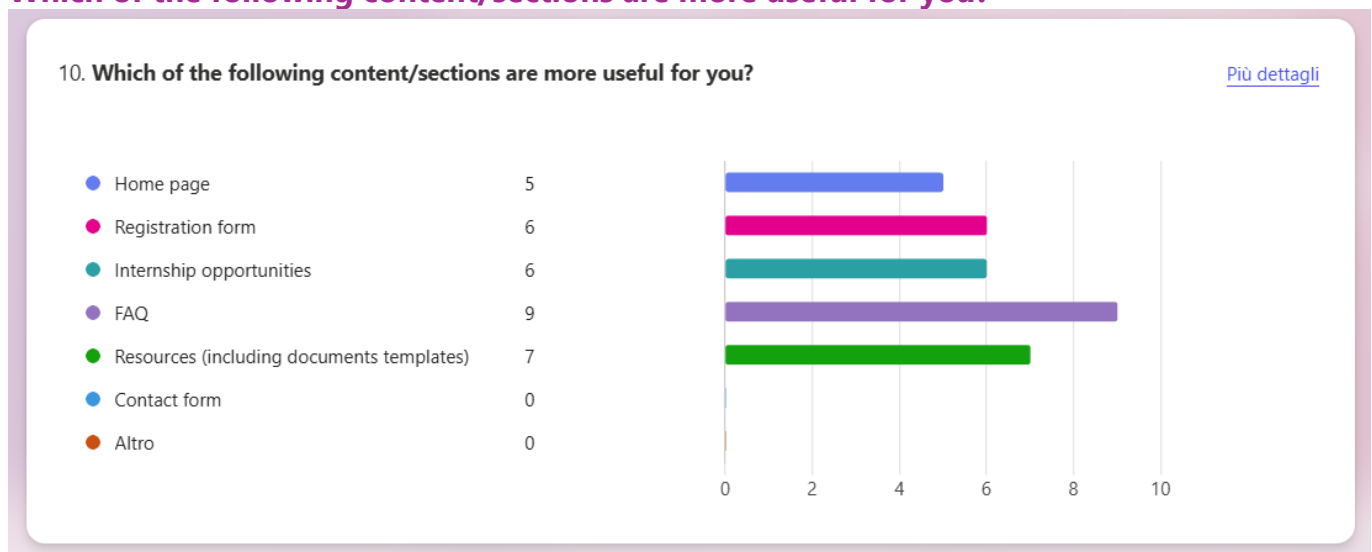


Figure 48 - Company Pre-Internship Survey (July 2025)

- FAQ is the most valued section, with 10 mentions, indicating the importance of clear guidance and practical information.



- Internship opportunities and Resources (including templates) are also highly useful, confirming the platform's core functionality is well-aligned with users' needs.
- Registration form and Home page are appreciated but slightly less critical compared to functional and support content.

In case you contacted the InnoNext team, which channels have you used?

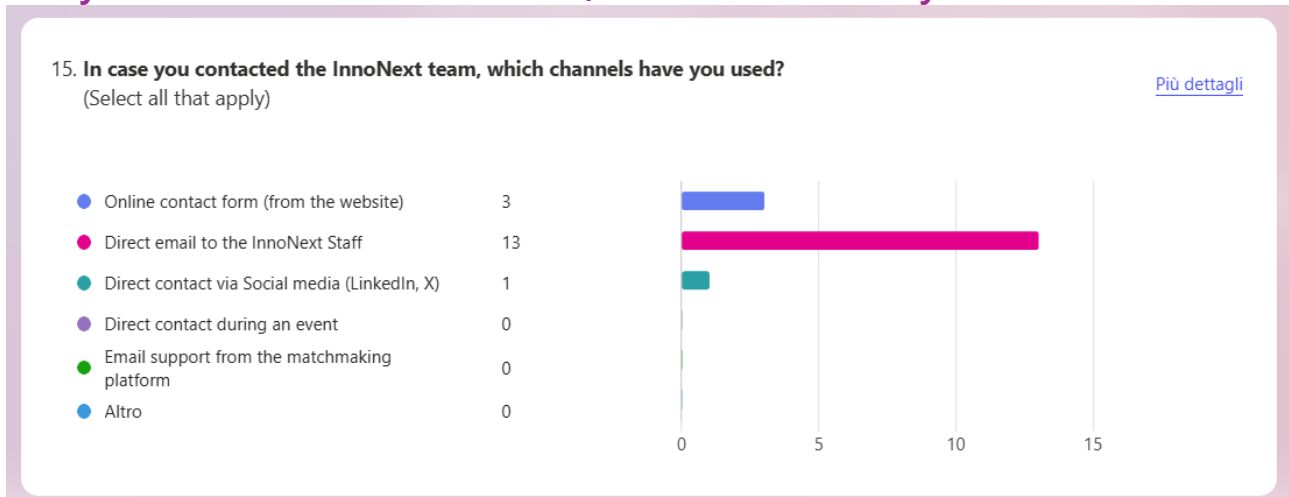


Figure 49 - Company Pre-Internship Survey (July 2025)

- Direct email is by far the preferred communication channel, indicating participants favor personal, direct contact.
- The online contact form is used but less frequently.
- Social media contact is rare, mentioned only once.

Overall, how would you rate the support you received from our team?



Figure 50 - Company Pre-Internship Survey (July 2025)

- 86% of responses are positive (*Extremely good, Very good, or Good*).



- 5 participants rated the support as "Extremely good," showing high satisfaction.
- Only 1 "Poor" and 1 "Acceptable" rating suggest isolated cases of dissatisfaction.

Which mentoring modality would you prefer participating in?

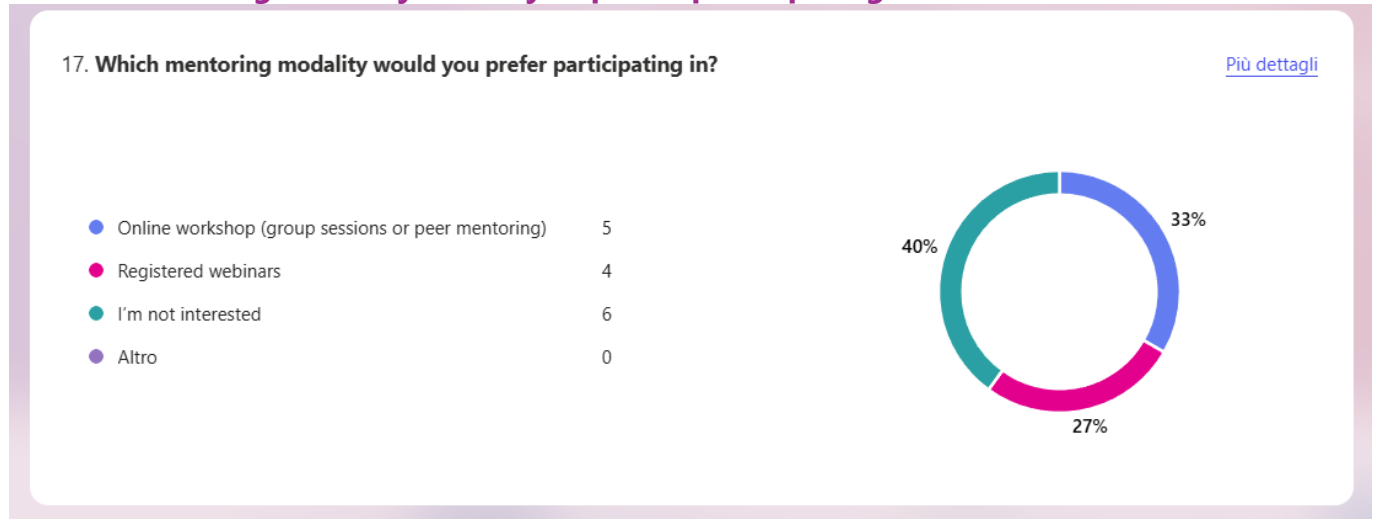


Figure 51 - Company Pre-Internship Survey (July 2025)

- Interest is split across modalities, with a slight preference for workshops.
- 40% are not interested in mentoring activities, which suggests some participants may feel self-sufficient or time-constrained.
- Workshops (group/peer mentoring) are slightly more favored than webinars among those interested in mentoring.



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InnoNext Consortium:

