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[info@innonext-project.eu](mailto:info@innonext-project.eu)

# Impact Assessment and Feedback from EC

**Deliverable D4.3**

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## Document Information

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Responsible partner	Réseau Entreprendre Piemonte <b>(RES)</b>
Responsible author:	Lisa Orefice, RES
Co-authors	Negar Mokarram Dorri, RES Simone Foglia, RES Maria Elisabetta Migoni, RES

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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## Version History

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V0.2	15/10/2025	Negar Mokarram Dorri [RES]	Integration Obj3
V0.3	15/10/2025	Simone Foglia [RES]	Integration Obj1 + Obj3
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V0.5	17/10/2025	Angelo Schiavone [ZUC]	Integration Obj2
V0.6	20/10/2025	Maria Elisabetta Migoni [RES]	Review and adjustment

<sup>1</sup> 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

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

<sup>3</sup> Creation, modification, final version for evaluation, revised version following evaluation, final.





V0.7	28/10/2025	Consortium Review [LINKS; ZUC]	Review and adjustment
V0.8	29/10/2025	Maria Elisabetta Migoni [RES]	Final adjustment
V1	07/11/2025	Giuseppe Rizzo [LINKS]	Quality assurance

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## Acronym List

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



## Executive summary

This document represents the 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:

Release	Month Delivery	Main Changes
1	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
2	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
3	M15	Update of the data collected on the V02; Talents Reactivation Campaign; Job Alert System; update of the Next Steps and integration of input and insight from the Review Meeting and First Report Review.

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

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 access<sup>4</sup> 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.

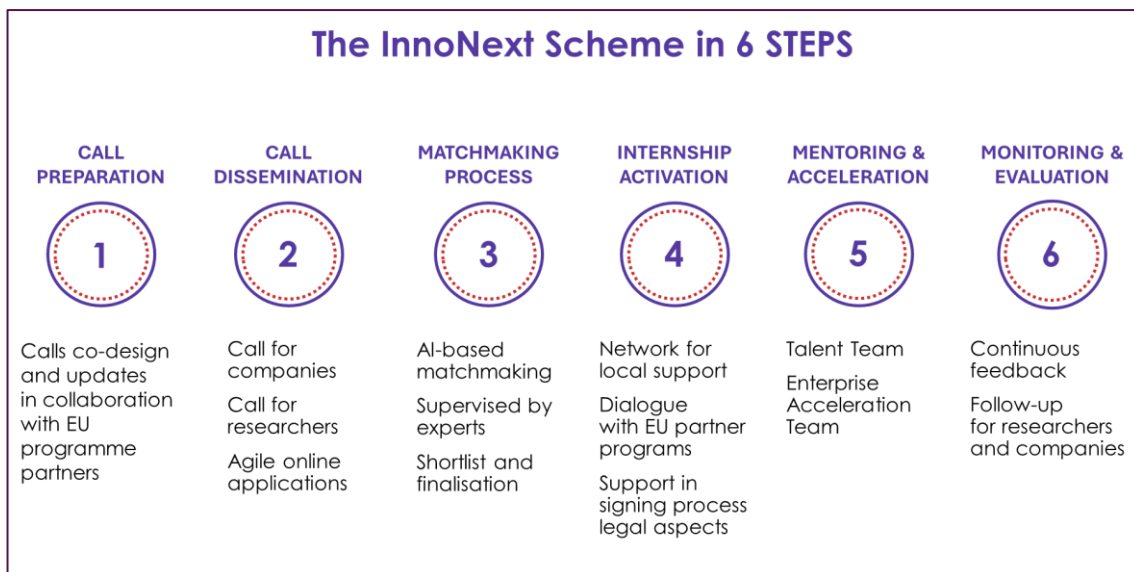


Figure 1 – The InnoNext schema

## 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.

<sup>4</sup> 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 is being regularly **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**<sup>5</sup>. At its core, ToC helps organisations 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.

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<sup>5</sup> Vogel I. (2012) Review of the use of 'Theory of Change' in international development: Review Report (for DfID). Isabel Vogel, UK. P. 86

url: [https://www.theoryofchange.org/wp-content/uploads/toco\\_library/pdf/DFID\\_ToC\\_Review\\_VogelV7.pdf](https://www.theoryofchange.org/wp-content/uploads/toco_library/pdf/DFID_ToC_Review_VogelV7.pdf)

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 behaviours, 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<sup>6</sup>.

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 as defined in the first release of the D4.3, is presented below.

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<sup>6</sup> Belcher, Brian; Palenberg, Markus (2018). "Outcomes and Impacts of Development Interventions: Toward Conceptual Clarity". *American Journal of Evaluation*. 39 (4): 478–495. doi:10.1177/1098214018765698

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

*Figure 2 - InnoNext Output, Outcomes and Impacts as defined in the first release of the D4.3*

### 3. Key Events M12 and M15

This document represents the third 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 12 (M12) and Month 15 (M15). This document is directly connected to and should be read as an update of the first and second version (V01 & V02).

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 R1 and R2.

The analysis focuses on the period from the beginning of August 2025 to the end of October 2025. A brief timeline, which is reported below, outlines the key events that had significant effects on the flow of InnoNext activities.



Figure 3 - Key Events between M12 and M15

Highlighting these events provides a 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.

#### 01<sup>st</sup> September – Talents Reactivation Campaign

Since the beginning of September, a campaign has been structured and launched to re-engage the talents registered on the platform. The activity is organized in several rounds, defined according to the responsiveness shown in the previous round. In mid-September, a second recall with a more personal and direct tone was carried out, enabling direct contact with the talents and the collection of valuable insights (see *Objective 3 - Section 4.1.1 – Talents Reactivation Campaign*).

#### 04<sup>th</sup> September – Workshop 3 as a Part of the InnoNext Mentoring Activity

With the third workshop, a more structured communication activity was defined, enabling a stronger outreach to InnoNext beneficiaries (see *Objective 3 - Section 4.3.7 – Mentoring*)

#### 15<sup>th</sup> September – Job Alert System

Between M12 and M15, a Job Alert System was tested and structured, becoming fully operational in September 2025. The system is designed to automatically send InnoNext opportunities via email to users registered on the platform (see *Objective 2 – Section 4.2.1 - Job Alert System*).

#### 18<sup>th</sup> September – EIT Milestones for Talents reached

At the beginning of September 2025, the target set for EIT beneficiaries was achieved, corresponding to more than 80 internships activated by October 2025 (a total of 82 internships in September 2025).

### **25<sup>th</sup> September – Review Meeting Year 1**

The first review meeting was held at the end of InnoNext's first year. This moment was particularly important, as it allowed the consortium, together with the Project Officer and the Project Reviewer, to summarise the progress achieved during the year. Insights and lessons learned were presented, and valuable feedback and suggestions were collected to support the continuous improvement of the scheme and the achievement of its objectives.

### **October 2025 – End of the first Internships**

In October, the first activated internships were completed, marking the conclusion of the first testing cycle of the InnoNext administrative flow. This milestone enabled the implementation of actions aimed at collecting feedback through final surveys and self-assessments.

### **02<sup>nd</sup> October – Media Kit for EU PPs Update**

At the beginning of October, a new set of media kits was shared with the EU PPs, primarily aimed at promoting and re-launching through their official channels the opportunity related to the webinar scheduled for 8 October.

### **08<sup>th</sup> October - Info Session Webinar**

A new Info Session Webinar dedicated to both Visiting Talents (VTs) and Hosting Companies (HCs) was held in early October. The event also involved selected stakeholders, including National Contact Points (NCPs), with the aim of presenting the opportunities offered by InnoNext to a broader audience. (see *Objective 3 – Section 4.3.6 – Tutoring*).

## 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 the previous version of Deliverable D4.3.

*Table 2 – SMART definition of Obj. 1 (as defined in the first release of the D4.3)*

<b>S</b>	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.
<b>M</b>	KPI1.1: 1 methodology; KPI1.2: 1 replication and upscaling toolkit;
<b>A</b>	The InnoNext interdisciplinary consortium possesses all the competencies and experience to release a groundbreaking methodology. It will be grounded on the Researcher Career Development Scheme and on the knowledge and the mentoring practices put in place by RES. This objective is also achieved through the following results: <b>OA1 The InnoNext scheme</b> <b>OA3 Replication and upscaling toolkit</b>
<b>R</b>	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: <b>EO2 Replicability and upscaling</b> , as well as the impacts: <b>I1 Develop Entrepreneurial Mindset, I2 Facilitate Knowledge Transfer, I3 Enhanced and Equal Access to Research Talent, I4 Increased Awareness and Knowledge.</b>
<b>T</b>	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 M12 and M15.

One of the key moments contributing to the improvement of the scheme between M12 and M15 was the **Review Meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2025**. This meeting represented a crucial

opportunity to collect feedback and insights from both an External Evaluator and the Project Officer. During the meeting, the following topics were presented:

- Project overview;
- Co-design activities with EU PPs;
- InnoNext platform and the user experience of the beneficiaries;
- Job Alert System;
- InnoNext Scheme, including the agreement kit, mentoring activities and promotion;
- KPI and deliverable overview

The final part of the meeting focused on sharing insights and lessons learned by the Consortium, fostering an **effective dialogue for gathering feedback and identifying improvement actions** for the InnoNext Scheme.

On 17<sup>th</sup> October, the review document for the first reporting period was shared, incorporating and addressing several suggestions and inputs that emerged during the Review Meeting.

In particular, the document highlights:

- the importance of strengthening engagement and reactivation activities for beneficiaries, by enhancing communication efforts and refining the messages delivered to the target groups;
- the need for closer alignment with EU programme partners, especially regarding timing and beneficiary needs, to foster greater involvement and participation;
- the value of highlighting and promoting InnoNext’s distinctive activities, such as mentoring and onboarding support.

These valuable insights enable the Consortium to identify the next steps and corrective actions aimed at mitigating risks and ensuring that project outcomes meet expectations.

*Table 3 – Actions followed the 1<sup>st</sup> project review feedback*

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	See D3.1 - The InnoNext Scheme (M12) for the full process

Action Performed	Comment	Relevant Output
	takes place once a match is confirmed. (see Section 4.3.4 in Objective 3)	
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 InnoNext Team) indicates if the Talent complete the Administrative activity and can start the Internship.	See D3.1 – InnoNext Scheme for the labels definition
First FSTP activations and internal refinement	The activations enabled testing and optimization of procedures. A dedicated email ( <a href="mailto:administration@innonext-project.eu">administration@innonext-project.eu</a> ) 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 Financial Agreement (previously 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

Action Performed	Comment	Relevant Output
Website improvements	The website has been regularly updated, including enhanced readability and user experience across all pages. A dedicated "Mentoring" Section was 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	16	28	33 <sup>7</sup>			
Plenary with EU PPs + POs (eg. Monitoring Meeting/Review Meeting)	2	3	4			
Meetings with EIC Pathfinder	3	3	3			
Meetings with EIC Transition	1	1	2			
Meetings with EIC SoE	1	1	1			
Meetings with EIC Accelerator	2	3	3			
Meetings with EIT	3	12	15			
Meetings with ERC	1	1	1			
Meetings with MSCA	2	3	3			
Meetings with RI	1	1	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)					

<sup>7</sup> Interactions with the EU PPs took place not only through online meetings but also **via email exchanges** and other communication channels (Microsoft Teams), with the aim of consolidating specific topics that had emerged during the co-design phase.

Indicator	M9	M12	M15	M18	M21	M24
	Upgrade of the Communication Materials and development of Media Kit for EU PPs (V02: 15/07/2025 – V03: 02/10/2025)					
Talent Reactivation Campaign (see Section 4.1.1)	1 (launched in September 2025)					

#### 4.1.1 Talents Reactivation Campaign

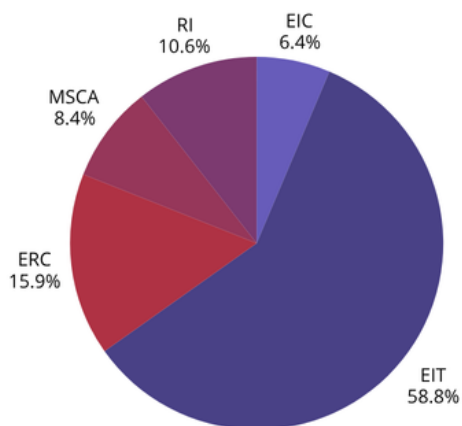


Figure 4 - Visiting Talents Signed on InnoNext (Data source: InnoNext Platform, 16th October 2025)

The overall growth of beneficiaries on the platform continues to show a slow but steady trend, as already reported in Version 02 of this document. The slow growth is particularly evident among beneficiaries from programmes whose pool mainly consists of PhD candidates and PostDocs (more detail on the trends in number in the *Objective 3 – Support entrepreneurship through internships*).

This led the consortium to launch a **recall and reactivation campaign** targeting these categories of VTs, with the aim of establishing direct contact with those who are already partially engaged but have not yet started or effectively benefited from the InnoNext opportunity.

The pilot test produced encouraging results, providing valuable motivation to further structure and systematise this activity in the upcoming period.

The reactivation campaign included two main actions, started on 1<sup>st</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> September. The key difference in the two actions approach consisted of a **direct and personalised communication** with each candidate, inviting them to take an action — either by scheduling a call to receive further information or by replying to the email to share any challenges encountered during their InnoNext experience.

Table 4 - Action per Affiliated Programme (October 2025)

Affiliate Programme	Email Sent	Reaction (mail or call booking)	Email answered	Call booked	Showed in call
EIC Pathfinder	31	11	9	5	3
EIC Transition	5	2	1	1	0
MSCA COFUND	8	1	1	0	-
MSCA Doctoral Networks	13	0	-	-	-
MSCA PostDoctoral Fellowships	28	6	3	1	1
ERC	100	13	11	4	4
RI	57	0	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>8</b>

**In both cases — whether through direct 1-to-1 calls or email responses — all collected feedback was systematically tracked and categorised into the following areas:**

- **User profile and objectives – Estimated frequency: 40%**

This category, the most frequent, reflects the direct request made in the outreach email ("could you tell me a bit more about the type of opportunity or the specific scientific area that interests you?"). The high response rate confirms the willingness of talents to engage when prompted personally.

**Focus:** The replies in this segment primarily consisted of PhD and PostDoc talents detailing their highly **specific and niche scientific areas** (e.g., specialized sub-fields of material science, specific branches of AI/ML).

**Insight:** This highlights that a significant portion of the non-matched talent pool has **deeply specialized profiles** that require manual intervention or hyper-targeted matching, rather than generic vacancy listings. The response provided the team with the necessary context for personalized, manual matching.

- **Matching and opportunities - Estimated frequency: 35%**

This is the second most frequent category, indicating that the **lack of suitable opportunities** is the main friction point for non-matched talents.

**Focus:** Feedback centred on two key issues: **sectorial gaps** and the **relevance of proposed matches**. Talents frequently stated that, despite the large number of registered companies, vacancies were not available in their specific industry (e.g., highly specialized chemistry, advanced aerospace engineering).

**Insight:** The replies suggest that while the AI matching system performs well for general profiles, it struggles to connect highly specific research backgrounds with appropriate, niche company demand, necessitating a **manual, human-driven review** of the company database.

- **Platform and user experience - Estimated frequency: 17%**

This segment captures feedback related to the functional aspects of the platform that directly impede the talent's ability to find opportunities independently.

**Focus:** Common issues raised were the **lack of advanced filtering options** and a request for **greater transparency** (e.g., the ability to view a complete list or comprehensive profiles of all available host companies, not just those proposed by the AI).

**Insight:** This data suggests that improving the platform's **search functionality and data visibility** could empower a high percentage of non-matched talents to find a match without direct team intervention.

- **Communication and support - Estimated frequency: 8%**

This category includes feedback on the clarity of the InnoNext initiative, the process, or the support provided.

- **Focus:** The low frequency here is a **positive indicator**, suggesting that the proactive outreach email itself was clear and well-received. Replies falling into this category were generally brief confirmations or specific logistical questions about the Calendly booking link or the eligibility of the grant/travel support.

- **Insight:** The team's prior communication efforts were generally effective in conveying the core benefits of the program, leaving the *matching* process as the primary challenge to be solved.

During the Talents Reactivation Campaign, the Consortium tested and assessed a different approach to the matching activity. In fact, one of the actions implemented focused on **offering the contacted VTs potential matching options with HCs**, based on individual profiles of VTs (as shared by the PhD/PostDoc themselves) and the HCs profile within the InnoNext community.

This activity aimed to assess whether the matching process for PhD and PostDoc candidates could be influenced by the current InnoNext platform structure, which is based on vacancies/opportunities. It tested the potential compatibility between VTs and HCs by **focusing on the characteristics of the companies themselves rather than on the specific opportunities offered**.

The feedback from the VTs was positive: **19 tailored proposals** were made, generating encouraging responses, particularly from EIC Pathfinder, MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowship, and ERC beneficiaries. In 3 cases, the process advanced to the point where the talent’s status was updated to “*selected*” on the platform, and in 1 of these cases, it resulted in the **activation of an internship**.

Table 5 - Test of HCs profile-based matching (October 2025)

Affiliate Programme	Companies proposal email	Positive feedback matching company based	Put in contact with companies	Selected on InnoNext Platform	Internship Activation
EIC Pathfinder	7	3	2	1	-
EIC Transition	1	-	-	-	-
MSCA COFUND	-	-	-	-	-
MSCA Doctoral Networks	-	-	-	-	-
MSCA PostDoctoral Fellowships	2	1	1	-	-
ERC	9	3	3	2	1
RI	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>

The Talent Reactivation Campaign helped the Consortium to identify **key aspects** relevant to different components of the scheme.

The following is a synthesis of the most valuable insights to consider with the aim to improve beneficiary engagement, which are combined with considerations emerging from consortium meetings, Deliverable 4.3 - V02 and the Review Meeting:

- **Communication activities:** need for greater segmentation and vertical tailoring of communication to each target group; communication efforts should also target stakeholders

who influence the actions of final beneficiaries (e.g., Principal Investigators/Project Coordinators).

- **Success stories:** inclusion and enhancement of storytelling around success cases and examples that can guide and inspire new registrants and inactive beneficiaries on the platform.
- **InnoNext Scheme:** introduction of elements that make participation in InnoNext more appealing to PhD and PostDoc profiles, ensuring that the benefits derived from the experience are both tangible and linked to measurable personal and professional skill development.
- **Platform approach:** tests the introduction of a list of companies on the platform or giving more space to the company description, to facilitate open dialogue and the identification of shared goals between talents and companies.

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

Table 6 - SMART definition of Obj. 2 (as defined in the first release of the D4.3)

<b>S</b>	Based on the InRecruiting <sup>8</sup> 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.
<b>M</b>	<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: ≥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: &lt;10 min for both talents and companies</p> <p>This objective is also achieved through the following results:</p> <p><b>KER1 AI-based automatic discovery</b></p> <p><b>KER2 AI-based automatic matchmaking</b></p> <p><b>KER3 ICT platform to manage open calls and matchmaking for innovators</b></p>
<b>A</b>	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.
<b>R</b>	This objective addresses the expected <b>outcome EO1 Support for at least 600 Internships, EO2 Replicability and upscaling</b>
<b>T</b>	It is achieved by WP2 "Iterative Technology Implementation" from M4 to M21.

The job matching system has benefited from the doubling of the sample size since the previous iteration, as presented in Deliverable D2.1. Given some of the pitfalls of the previous evaluation methodology, we have revised our approach to ensure a more comprehensive and representative measurement of system performance.

Specifically, two distinct samples of talents of interest have been defined:

- The narrow sample, comprising candidates who were ultimately hired by the company;
- The broad sample, including candidates who were selected through human review, encompassing also those invited for interviews.

<sup>8</sup> Recruiting Platform provided by ZUC and adapted to the InnoNext Scheme.

The introduction of the broad sample serves two purposes: it effectively doubles the dataset size and aligns the evaluation more closely with the downstream task - namely, the identification of candidates to interview.

When computing evaluation metrics such as Mean Reciprocal Rank (MRR) or recall, only the highest-ranked candidate per vacancy is considered. This methodological adjustment resolves a limitation identified in the previous evaluation approach. In the earlier setup, if two candidates were selected for interviews (e.g., ranked first and second), the resulting MRR would decrease to 0.75, despite the algorithm performing optimally. Restricting the computation to the top-ranked candidate eliminates this artefact and yields a more accurate performance indicator.

The current evaluation, based on 145 vacancies, yields the following results:

- Mean Reciprocal Rank (MRR): 0.43 for the broad sample and 0.33 for the narrow sample;
- Top-5 Recall: 68% for the broad sample and 50% for the narrow sample;
- Top-10 Recall: 86% for the broad sample and 73% for the narrow sample.

As before, the Top-10 is important for us, because it indicates how often the ideal candidate appears on the first page of recommendations. Further details regarding the matchmaking performance are presented in Figure 4.

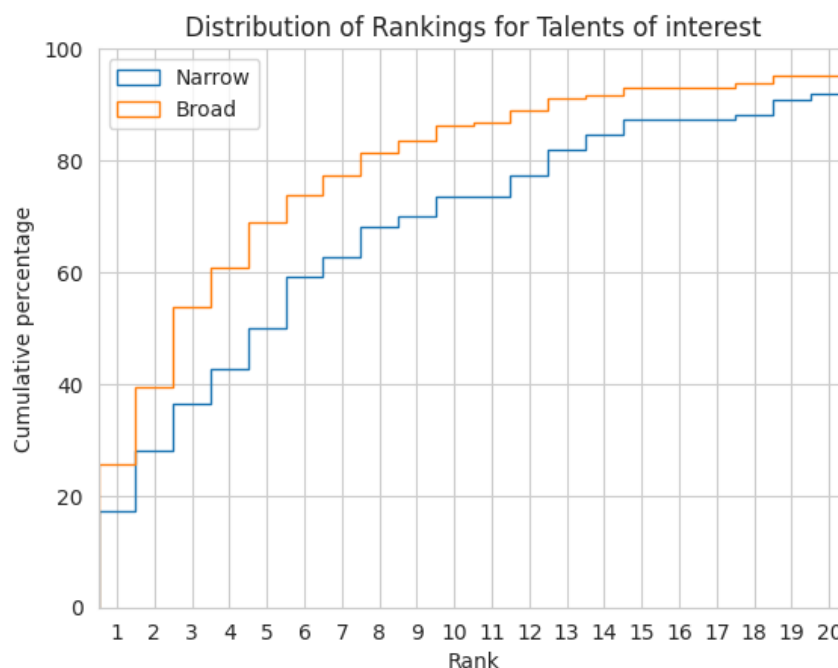


Figure 5 - The updated job matching score distribution of chosen talents for both broad and narrow samples

We continue to monitor candidates who achieve **high matching scores but are not registered for a specific position**. This group represents one of the most promising sources for identifying new potential matches. The InnoNext team has decided to track the Top-3 score, defined as the score of the third-highest-ranked unregistered candidate. This choice mitigates the influence of occasional spurious matches or misclassifications by the algorithm, which can affect the top-

ranked score. A consistently high Top-3 score, therefore, suggests that there are at least three strong candidate–vacancy matches within this unregistered group.

The corresponding results are presented in Figure 5. As can be observed, the scores remain consistently high, indicating that the matchmaking algorithm continues to identify significant, yet unexplored, matching opportunities.

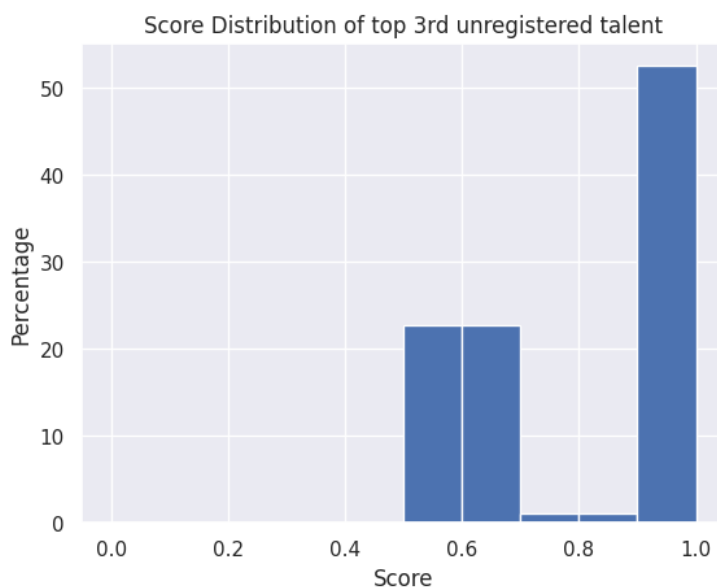


Figure 6 - The distribution of the third highest ranked unregistered candidate.

### Relevant indicators

The following table shows the relevant indicator related to Obj2.

Table 7 – Relevant indicator related to Obj2 (Data at 13/10/2025)

Indicator	M9
KPI2.1 - Number of talents/businesses discovered	639 Visiting Talents and 255 Hosting Companies
KPI2.2 - Time required to perform matches with internships (average)	0.68s (median value)
KPI2.3 - Top-5 accuracy of the matches proposed	86% Top-10 <b>recall</b> of both hired and at least interviewed talents <sup>9</sup>
KPI2.4 - Time required to join the InnoNext scheme through the platform	less than 10 min <sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> By using the activated internships as a proxy for the ground truth, we adopted recall as computed with respect to the AI matches, as the core evaluation metric.

<sup>10</sup> 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.

## 4.2.1 Job Alert System

To increase talent engagement, the **Job Alert System** delivers weekly, personalised job recommendations to eligible candidates through an automated email campaign. Each Monday morning, non-selected or non-hired talents receive a customised email containing a ranked list of open opportunities most relevant to their profile. The email includes a personalised greeting with the talent's name, a short descriptive text, a section listing the competencies **required for each position**, and two interactive buttons, one for accessing the full position description and another for providing negative feedback if the opportunity is not suitable. This design ensures both transparency and interactivity, allowing talents to easily explore or refine future recommendations.

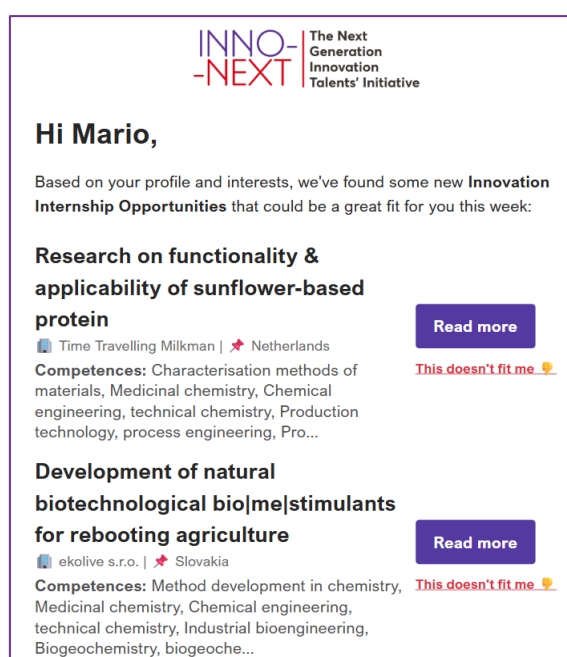


Figure 7: Email example layout

The recommendation engine behind these alerts is powered by the **Job Matching (JM) algorithm**. Since the activation of this service (15<sup>th</sup> September), the Job Alert emails have been sent to 490 talents, generating an open rate of 62,52% and a click-through rate of 35%, with particularly strong results for **EIT (64,86% open rate)** and **EIC (70,32%)** programs. Most importantly, over **70 engagement actions** were recorded from 42 talents, corresponding to **job applications that could be directly linked to the Job Alert System**. These metrics confirm the growing effectiveness of the approach in transforming recommendations into real applications and increasing the overall activation rate of talents within the InnoNext ecosystem.

Table 8 - Number of people receiving emails per programme

Program	People receiving emails
EIC	38
EIT	266
ERC	78
MSCA	52
RI	46

Table 9: Email open rate per programme

Program	Email Open rate
EIC	64,86
EIT	70,32
ERC	47,67
MSCA	57,67
RI	55,71

Table 11 - Email CTR percentage per programme

Program	Email CTR(%)
EIC	42
EIT	32
ERC	49
MSCA	48
RI	13

Table 10 - Engagement per programme

Program	Unique Talents	Num of Engagement	Engagement rate(%)
EIC	38	4	10,52
EIT	<b>266</b>	33	12.40
ERC	78	4	5.1
MSCA	52	1	1.9
RI	46	0	0



### 4.3. Objective 3 - Support entrepreneurship through internships

**Objective 3** is closely linked to **Objective 1** and is cross-cutting 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**.

Table 12 - SMART definition of Obj. 3 (as defined in the first release of the D4.3)

<b>S</b>	Allow eligible researchers (PhD candidates, postdoctoral researchers, and relevant students) to undertake innovation internships in hosting companies, fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange.
<b>M</b>	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
<b>A</b>	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.
<b>R</b>	This objective addresses the expected outcome: <b>EO1 Support for at least 600 Internships, EO3 Increased visibility of EU funding programmes</b> , and contributes to all impacts (I1, I2, I3, I4)
<b>T</b>	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.

Between **M12 and M15**, a series of strategic actions were implemented and aligned with the next step identified in the D4.3 – V02.

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

As of now, **643 talents and 256 companies** have registered on the platform, highlighting a continuous growth aligned with the trends triggered between M9 and M12.

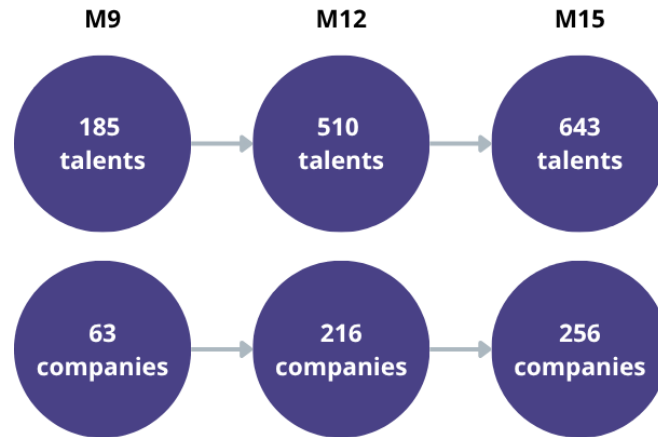


Figure 8 - Number on the Platform (Data source: InnoNext Platform, 16<sup>th</sup> October 2025)

Currently, **200 Innovation Internship opportunities** are published, of which 146 are aligned with the Deep Tech stream and 54 are part of the Aspiring Innovators stream. At present, **97 matches have been confirmed and start an effective Internship.**

### Activated Internships

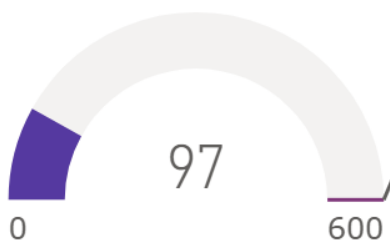


Figure 9 - Activated Internship (Data source: InnoNext Platform, 16<sup>th</sup> October 2025)

### Open opportunities

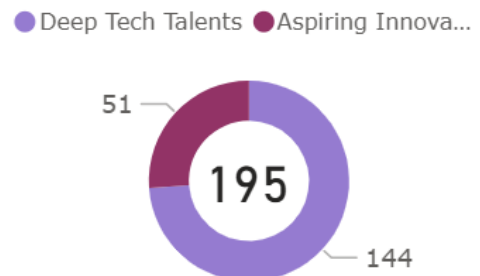


Figure 10 - Open Opportunities (Data source: InnoNext Platform, 16<sup>th</sup> October 2025)



### 4.3.1 Visiting Talents

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

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

The growth of talents between M12 and M15 has shown steady growth.

Table 13 - Visiting Talents Signed on InnoNext (Data source: InnoNext Platform, 16<sup>th</sup> October 2025)

Indicator	M9	M12	M15
<b>Visiting Talents Signed on InnoNext</b>			
Visiting Talents	185	510	643
EIC	17	31	41
EIT	41	294	378
ERC	86	97	102
MSCA	33	45	54
RI	8	43	68

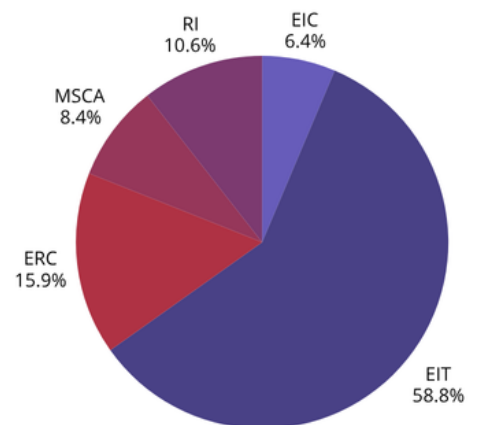


Figure 11 -Visiting Talents Signed on InnoNext (Data source: InnoNext Platform, 16<sup>th</sup> October 2025)

### EIC Beneficiaries

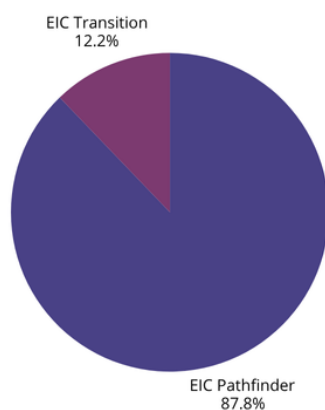


Figure 12 - EIC Visiting Talents on the Platform (Data source: InnoNext Platform, October 2025)

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. Both beneficiaries were included by May 2025, after the collection of feedbacks form potential beneficiaries and stakeholders during the EIC Summit 2025 (April 2025 - M9).

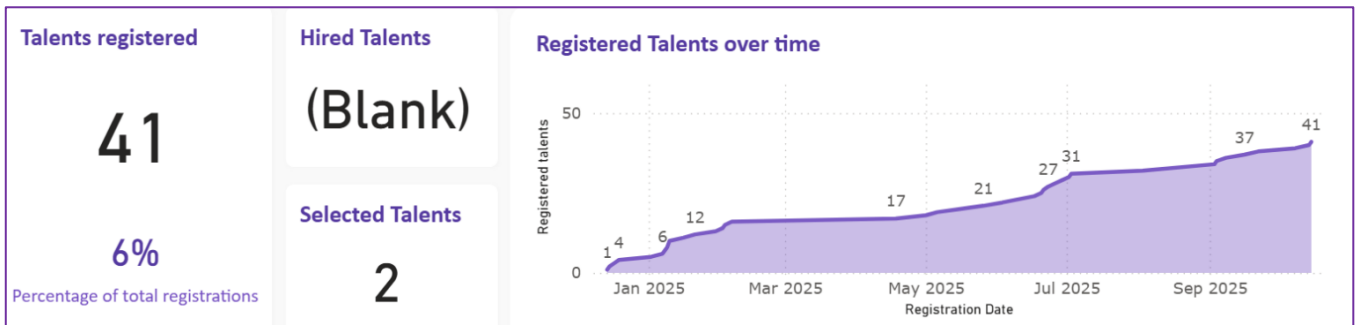


Figure 13 – EIC Registered Talents over time (Data source: InnoNext Platform, October 2025)

### EIT Beneficiaries

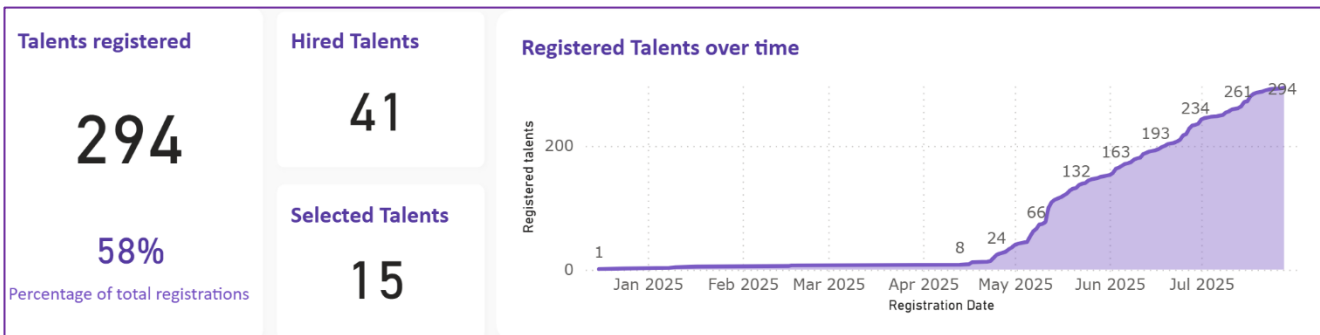


Figure 14 - EIT Registered Talents over time (Data source: InnoNext Platform, July 2025)

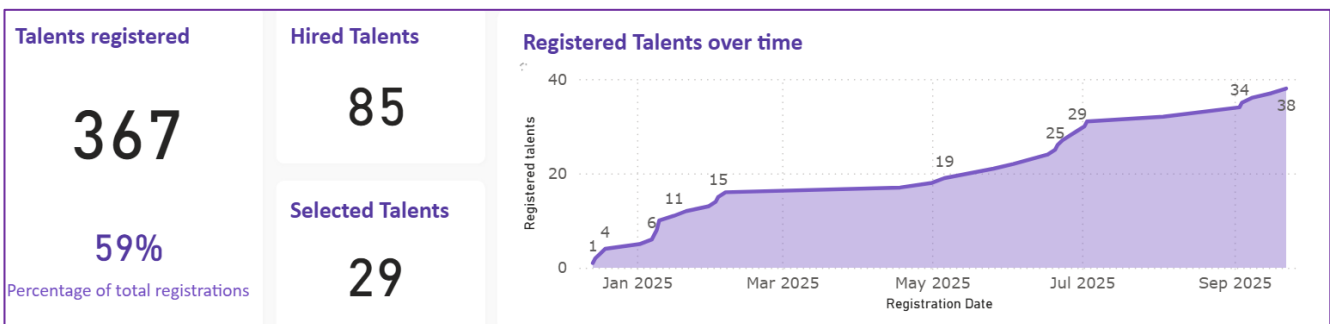


Figure 15 - EIT Registered Talents over time (Data source: InnoNext Platform, October 2025)

The number of beneficiaries from the EIT programme continued to grow steadily during August and September 2025 (M13-M14), leading to the **achievement of the target earlier than expected** (October 2025 – M15). This resulted in a slight growth during October 2025, due to the full allocation of funds dedicated to EIT talent internships.

A total of 82 internships were activated involving EIT Talents in September 2025.

As mentioned in V02 (M12) of this deliverable, EIT beneficiaries show greater diversity compared to those from the EIC, ERC, MSCA, and RI programmes. While the latter are typically DeepTech-



oriented and research-intensive, EIT participants often include Master’s Label students classified as *Aspiring Innovators* — individuals with an entrepreneurial and interdisciplinary mindset that aligns well with the InnoNext Scheme. It is important to highlight that EIT beneficiaries **do not always hold an active contract with the programme they belong to, to be considered eligible for InnoNext**, demonstrating higher levels of flexibility and adaptability. On the other side, PhD and PostDoc are involved in **projects with constraints of execution** and clear actions defined in the workplans.

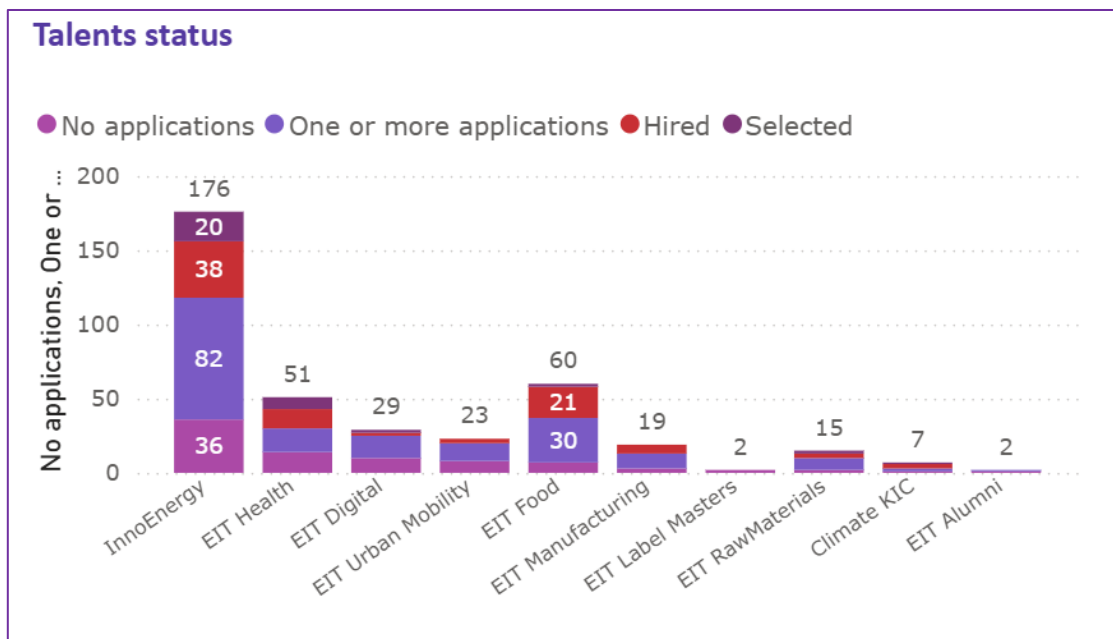


Figure 16 - EIT Talents Status (Data source: InnoNext Platform, October 2025)

### ERC Beneficiaries

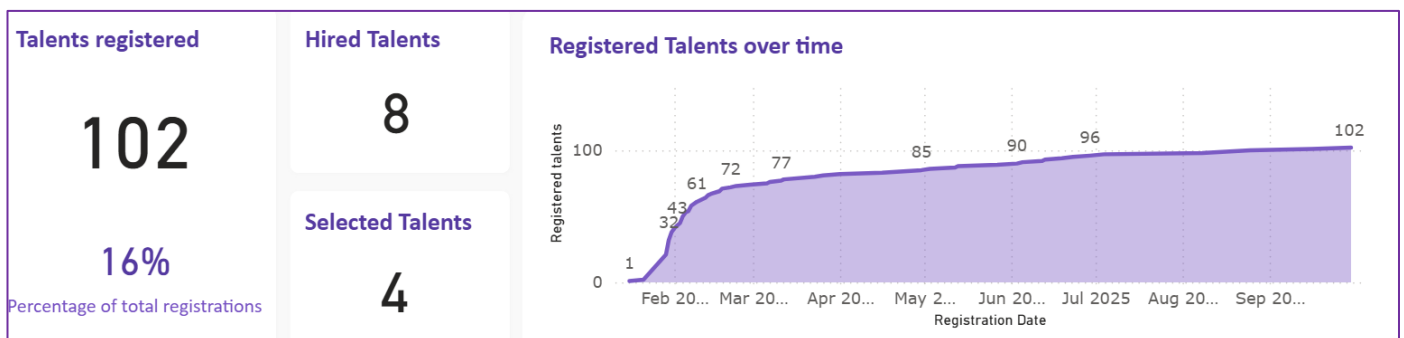


Figure 17 - ERC Registered Talents over time (Data source: InnoNext Platform, October 2025)



## MSCA Beneficiaries



Figure 18 - MSCA Registered Talents over time (Data source: InnoNext Platform, October 2025)

One of the factors influencing the participation of talents from the MSCA programme is that their original project — under which the talent is employed — **already includes a predefined training plan that typically encompasses a secondment or internship**. As a result, an amendment to the initial contract is required for the talent to take part in the InnoNext Initiative.

## RI Beneficiaries



Figure 19 - RI Registered Talents over time (Data source: InnoNext Platform, October 2025)

With regard to the talents coming from the **MSCA and RI programmes**, it is important to highlight that these two categories are not supported through a financial support under InnoNext, unlike beneficiaries from the EIC, EIT, and ERC programmes (see Section 4.3.5 – *Financial Support for Third Parties*).

## 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 14 - Talents per Country (Data source: Dashboard, 16<sup>th</sup> October 2025)

Country	M9	M12	M15
Australia	-	1	1
Austria	4	22	24
Belgium	5	14	23



Country	M9	M12	M15
Brazil	-	1	2
Canada	-	-	1
Colombia	-	2	2
Cyprus	1	1	1
Czech Republic	3	2	1
Czechia	-	5	6
Denmark	3	6	7
Estonia	1	1	5
Finland	5	27	35
France	8	35	61
Germany	12	33	53
Greece	5	8	11
Hungary	1	2	4
India	-	5	9
Ireland	3	9	12
Israel	-	2	2
Italy	13	31	48
Kenya	-	1	1
Lebanon	-	1	1
Lithuania	1	1	2
Luxembourg	2	2	2
Malaysia	-	1	1
Malta	-	1	1
Marocco	-	-	3
Netherlands	7	26	38
Nigeria	-	2	3
Norway	2	4	4
Pakistan	-	-	2
Poland	1	6	10
Portugal	7	21	27
Romania	-	4	7
Serbia	-	1	1
Slovakia	-	-	3
Slovenia	-	-	1
South Africa	-	1	1
Spain	15	65	80
Sweden	7	78	103
Switzerland	4	7	8



Country	M9	M12	M15
Tunisia	-	-	1
Turkey	1	3	5
Ukraine	-	-	1
United Kingdom	9	23	27
United States	-	-	1
Zambia	-	1	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 13% of the talents is 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.

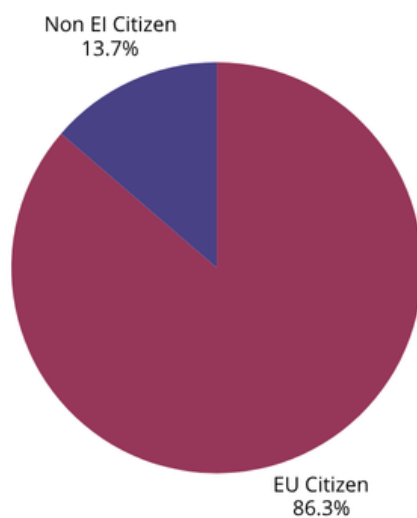


Figure 21 - EU and Non-EU Citizen (Data source: InnoNext Platform, 16th October 2025)

Number	place_of_residence_country
2	Algeria
1	Australia
19	Austria
1	Bangladesh
19	Belgium
2	Brazil
1	Canada
2	China
1	Colombia
1	Cuba
1	Cyprus
9	Czechia
8	Denmark
1	Egypt
4	Estonia
29	Finland
55	France
1	Georgia
61	Germany
12	Greece
1	Guam
1	Honduras
3	Hungary
15	India
1	Iran
11	Ireland
1	Israel
58	Italy
1	Jamaica
1	Japan
1	Kenya
2	Lithuania
2	Luxembourg
1	Malaysia
4	Morocco
36	Netherlands
2	Nigeria
3	Norway
2	Pakistan
9	Poland
34	Portugal
7	Romania
1	Serbia
4	Slovakia
2	Slovenia
1	South Africa
78	Spain
92	Sweden
6	Switzerland
1	Trinidad and Tobago
1	Tunisia
7	Turkey
21	United Kingdom
2	United States
1	Zambia

Figure 20 - Place of Residence of VT (Data source: Dashboard, 16th October 2025)



## Talents status

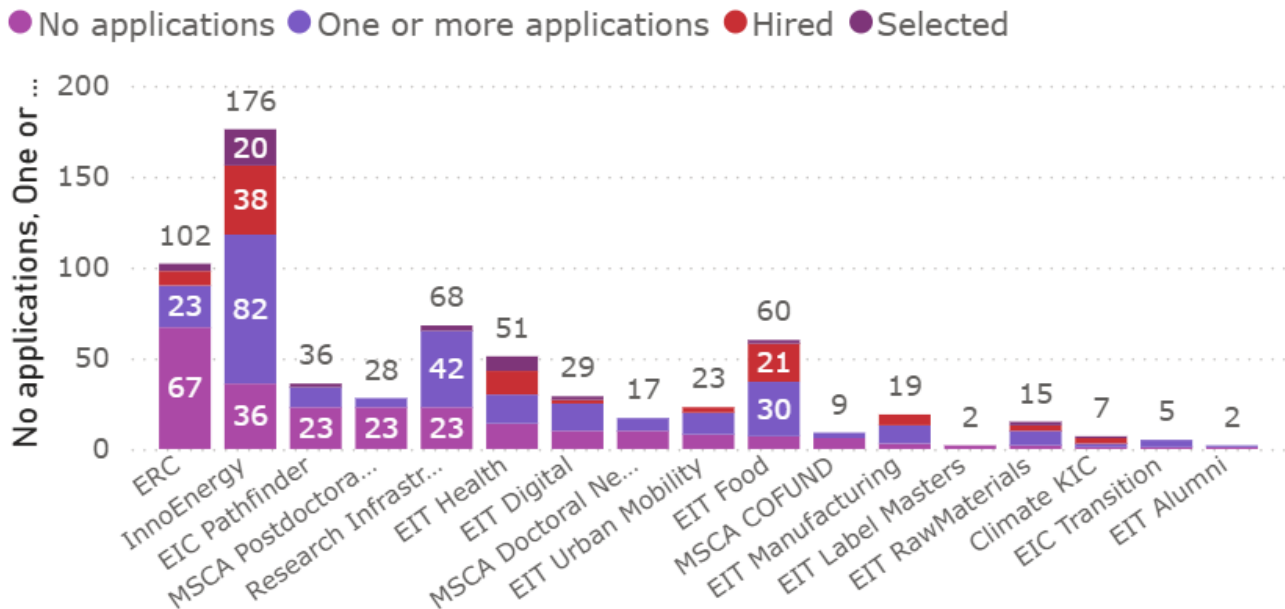


Figure 22 -Talents Status (Data source: Dashboard, October 2025)

One clear takeaway from Figure 22Figure 22 -Talents Status (Data source: Dashboard, October 2025) 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 condition has been explored through the **Reactivation Campaign** (see Section 4.1.1 - Talents Reactivation Campaign), which helps the consortium to identify next steps to improve the InnoNext Scheme.

In the following Figure, a visual representation of the main competences of the talents in the InnoNext Platform. The graph shows a higher level of clustering and a broader range of skills covered, compared to what was reported in Version 02 of Deliverable D4.3 (M12).

The larger circles represent the fields, while the smaller ones indicate the specific competences that fall within each corresponding field.



### Talents' main competences\*

Field

- Biotechnology and Biosystems Engineering: Biotechnolo...
- Cell Biology, Development, Stem Cells and Regeneration:...
- Computer Science and Informatics: Informatics and infor...
- Condensed Matter Physics: Structure, electronic properti...
- Earth System Science: Physical geography, geology, geo...
- Fundamental Constituents of Matter: Particle, nuclear, pl...
- Human Mobility, Environment, and Space: Human geogr...
- Integrative Biology : from Genes and Genomes to Syste...
- Materials Engineering: Advanced materials development:...
- Molecules of Life: Biological Mechanisms , Structures an...
- Neuroscience and Disorders of the Nervous System: Ner...
- Physical and Analytical Chemical Sciences: Analytical che...
- Physiology in Health, Disease and Ageing: Organ and tis...
- Prevention, Diagnosis and Treatment of Human Diseases:...
- Systems and Communication Engineering: Electrical, elec...
- The Human Mind and Its Complexity: Cognitive science, ...

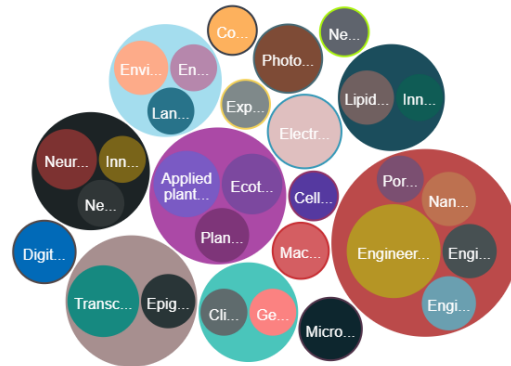


Figure 23 - Talents' main competences (Data source: Dashboard, October 2025)

### 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 steady growth between M12 and M15.**

In M12, the target group of eligible InnoNext companies was expanded to include those supported by the **MSCA programme**. This enlargement broadened the range of potential beneficiaries and fostered greater cross-pollination among a wider number of EU programmes.

Indicators	M9	M12	M15
<b>Hosting Companies Signed on InnoNext</b>			
Hosting Companies	63	216	255
EIC	41	81	92
EIT	22	135	162
MSCA	-	-	0
Open Positions	23	141	200

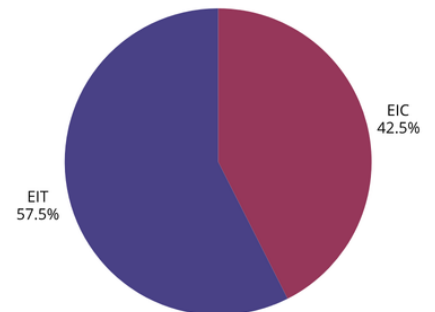


Figure 24 - Hosting Companies on the Platform (Data source: Dashboard, October 2025)

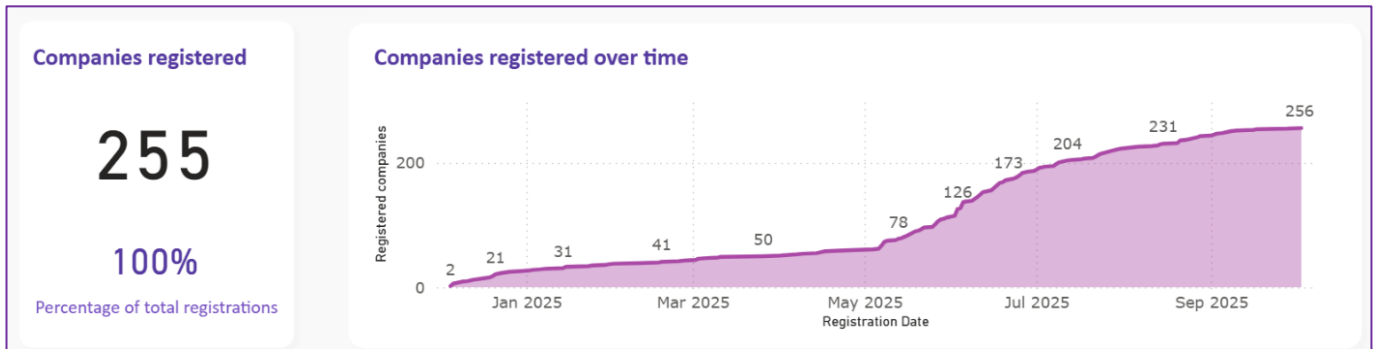


Figure 25 - HC Registered over time (Data source: Dashboard, Octobre 2025)

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.

### Companies Information

**Over 79% of the hosting companies currently registered on the InnoNext platform have between 1 and 15 employees** (Figure 27). 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.

**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:

- 1. 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

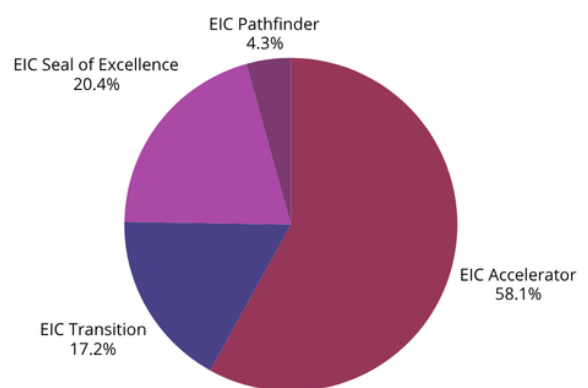


Figure 26 - EIC Companies on the Platform (Data source: Dashboard, Octobre 2025)

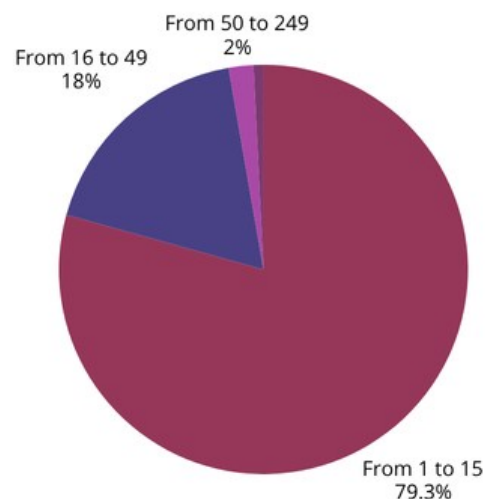


Figure 27 - Hosting Companies employees (Data source: Dashboard, Octobre 2025)



participants). **At this stage, companies cannot access the platform's full functionalities.** This status is maintained until the necessary documents are submitted.

2. **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*)

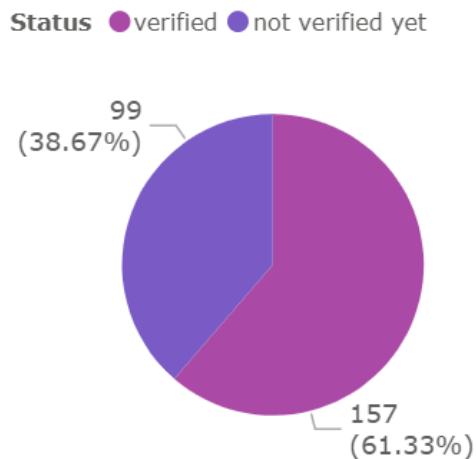


Figure 28 - HC status on the Platform (Data source: Dashboard, October 2025)

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

**61% have completed their registration** by submitting the required documentation.

The 38% has not verified the account and this condition can 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.

In Month 14 (September), a reactivation campaign was carried out targeting companies **still classified as prospects** (*not verified yet*), with the aim of better understanding the dynamics affecting this category of beneficiaries. The campaign resulted in the **conversion of two companies** into active participants. For the remaining prospects, no direct response was received.

A dedicated follow-up activity was carried out with **companies that had open vacancies**. The objective was to better understand the reasons behind cases where no match was finalised. The approach mirrored the methodology of the Talent Reactivation Campaign: each company representative received a direct and personalised email, with the possibility to schedule a follow-up call if further discussion was needed.

A total of **39 emails** were exchanged between HC and InnoNext support. Out of these, 15 were incoming responses containing actual user feedback. The remaining 24 emails were outgoing replies or follow-ups from the internal team.

Key Insights:

1. **Technical reliability issues (27%)** – Login failures, disappearing logs, and missing candidate information reduce platform trust.



2. **Low-quality candidate matching (33%)** – HCs report unqualified applicants and poor responsiveness.
3. **Unclear processes (20%)** – Companies are unsure about publishing rules and next steps after selection.
4. **Feature limitations (13%)** – Users request proactive tools (candidate database) and post-selection guidance.
5. **Privacy concern (7%)** – Cross-visibility of candidate emails indicates a data protection flaw.

### 4.3.3 Opportunities

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

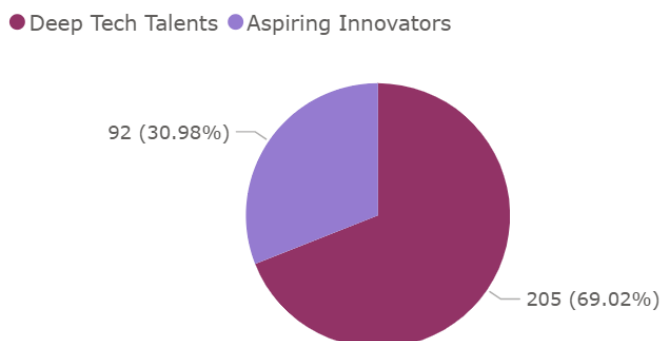
<b>KPI</b>	<b>KPI3.3: 300+ deep tech internships</b>
<b>Monitoring</b>	<b>KPI3.4: 300+ aspiring innovator internships</b>

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

While the overall number of beneficiaries registered on the platform has shown slow but steady growth, the number of opportunities published on the platform experienced a **significant increase between M12 and M15**, resulting in a doubling of the total number of opportunities published on the Platform.

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



Among the total number of opportunities published on the Platform (not only the active one), **the majority, over 69%, is focused on finding Deep Tech talents**, while **30% target Aspiring Innovators**, talents with broader, cross-cutting competencies not strictly tied to a single research domain.

Figure 29 - Opportunities Stream (Data source: Dashboard, October 2025)

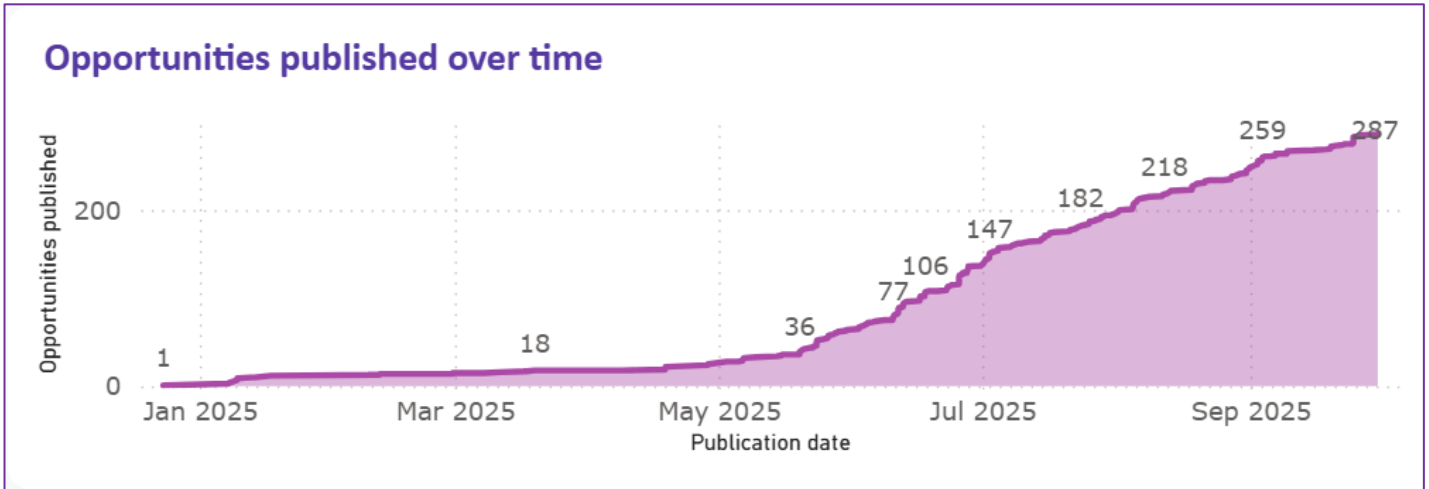


Figure 30 - Opportunities Published over the time (Data source: Dashboard, October 2025)

### Companies opportunities

● Without published opportunities ● With published opportunities

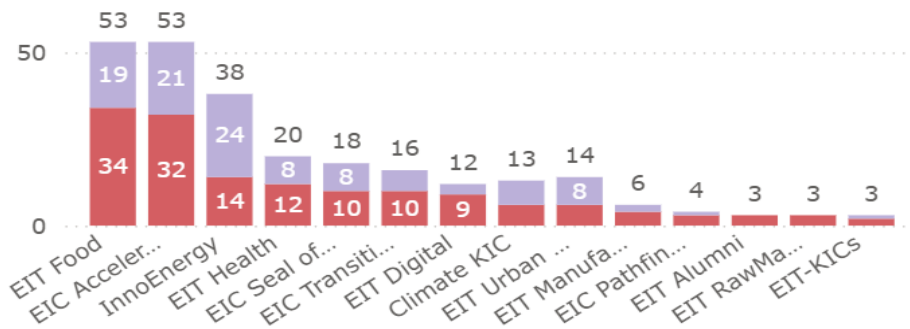


Figure 31 - Companies who published an Opportunity (Data source: Dashboard, Octobre 2025)

Among the Hosting Companies (HCs) registered on the InnoNext platform, **44% have actually published an opportunity to engage talents.**

As of October 2025, **45 companies have successfully launched an Innovation Internship**, showing a steady growth in numbers and a higher engagement of the hosting companies in the talents engagement.

In the following section (4.3.4 Matching and Innovation Internship), it is highlighted that there are some companies that activate more than one internship, and are hosting more than one talent.

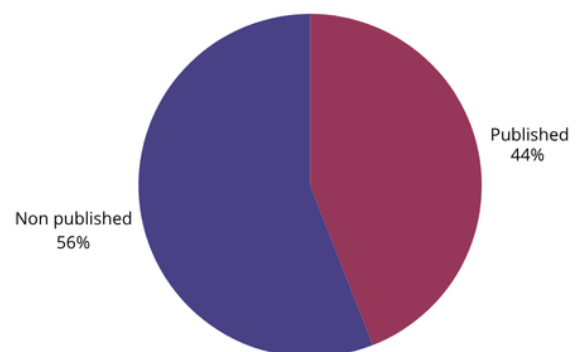


Figure 32 - Companies who published or not published an Opportunity (Data source: Dashboard, Octobre 2025)



The growth in the number of vacancies also reflects a broader range of skills sought by the companies, resulting in a diversified set of opportunities spanning **28 different fields** of application.

### Most requested competences in the published opportunities

Competences and fields are mapped through the taxonomy of the ERC Evaluation panels and keywords, which includes a total of 28 fields and 337 competences.

#### Field

- Computer Science and Informatics: Informati...
- Condensed Matter Physics: Structure, electro...
- Materials Engineering: Advanced materials d...
- Molecules of Life: Biological Mechanisms , S...
- Physical and Analytical Chemical Sciences: A...
- Prevention, Diagnosis and Treatment of Hu...
- Products and Processes Engineering: Produc...
- Systems and Communication Engineering: El...

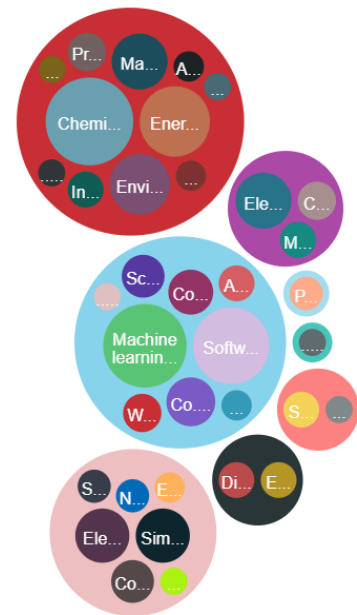


Figure 33 - Most requested competences in the published opportunities (Data source: Dashboard, Octobre 2025)

### 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**

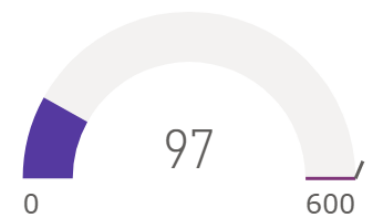
**Between M12 and M15, a rapid increase was recorded in the number of matches and actual innovation internship activations through InnoNext Initiative.**

The total rose from 44 internships in July 2025 to **97 in October 2025** (data: 16<sup>th</sup> October 2025).

#### Activated Internships

Table 15 - Innovation Internship Activated at 16th October 2025

Indicators	M9	M12	M15
Innovation Internship Activated	-	44	97





The positive trend is primarily linked to the conditions and actions highlighted in the different versions of this document, particularly those actions implemented in direct coordination with the EU PPs (e.g., EIT involvement and the diffusion and update of the Media Kits).

Equally important was the revision of the workflow aimed at improving the usability and user experience for beneficiaries on the platform. A key example was the **relocation of the eligibility check for talents through the Declaration of Honour** (and, for EIT talents, the Certificate/Engagement Letter). This change ensured that the document now needs to be submitted only once for the specific match validated, rather than for each application. This modification was implemented on 19 June 2025 and is described in detail in Deliverables D3.1 – V02 and D4.3 – V02. It was subsequently tested and validated in the following months, demonstrating that **facilitating beneficiary interactions** led to increased dynamism within the platform.

In addition, the **talent status tracking system** was tested, introducing a clearer distinction between those marked as *selected*—ready to start the administrative flow leading to the agreement signature—and those marked as *hired*, identifying matches that have completed the administrative process and officially started the Innovation Internship.

A specific focus is needed on the *selected* status, which includes all beneficiaries indexed as such, regardless of whether an internship was ultimately activated.

Different cases can be identified and summarised as follows:

- **Changes within InnoNext:** e.g., some talents were selected by multiple companies on the InnoNext platform but activated the internship with only one; some companies selected multiple talents but ultimately proceeded with only one.
- **External changes:** e.g., some talents found internship or job opportunities outside InnoNext; some companies decided not to proceed with activation due to internal reasons beyond InnoNext's control.

These elements emerged during Consortium meetings and led to the decision to **further refine the status system**. The goal is to ensure that only those effectively ready to start the administrative flow remain under the *selected* status, while retaining information about those who validated a match and passed the interview phase but did not ultimately activate an internship within the InnoNext initiative

Another noteworthy aspect concerns the activity of the companies that have launched Innovation Internships. Out of 97 activated internships, 47 companies currently have active Internships; almost half compared to the number of talents with ongoing internships. This highlights that **some**

Hired Talents

92

Selected Talents

36



**companies have activated multiple internships**, with some HCs who are hosting more than 4 VTs, with a maximum of 8 active Innovation Internships.

A summary of the distribution of companies by number of activated internships is presented below.

Table 16 - Innovation Internship activated per companies (Data source: Dashboard, Octobre 2025)

N. of VTs per HCs	N. of HCs
1	27
2	8
3	4
More than 4	8

This situation has prompted the consortium to initiate an in-depth analysis of these cases, with a particular focus on those involving a high number of activations, in order to better understand the conditions and variables that have facilitated successful matches and Internship activation.

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

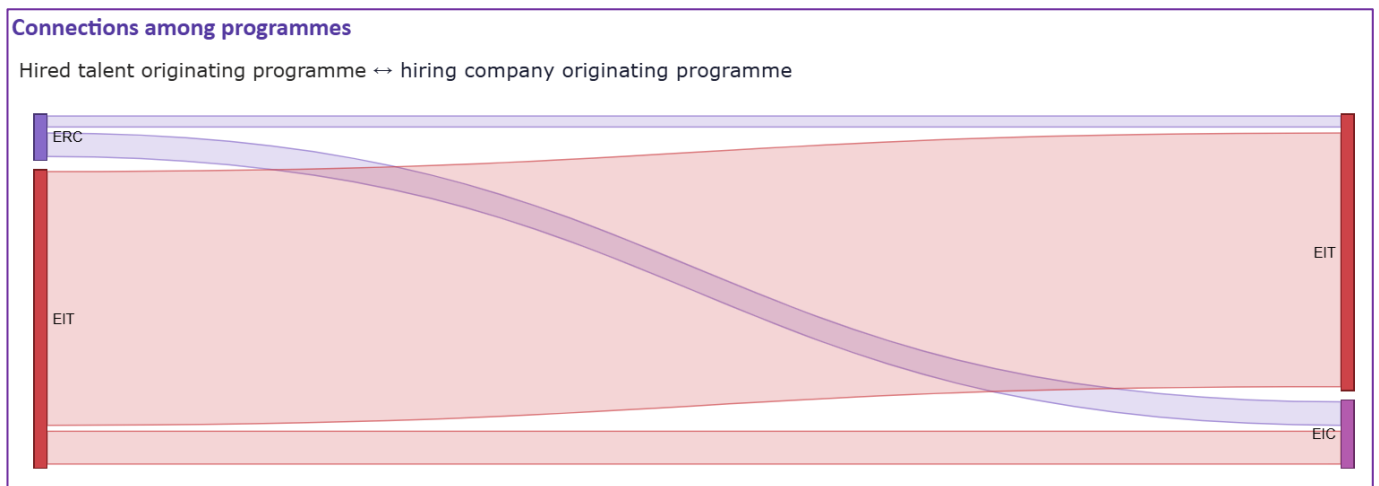


Figure 34 - Hired talent per Programme - Hiring Company per Programme (Data source: Dashboard, October 2025)

The 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 D4.3 – V02 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**

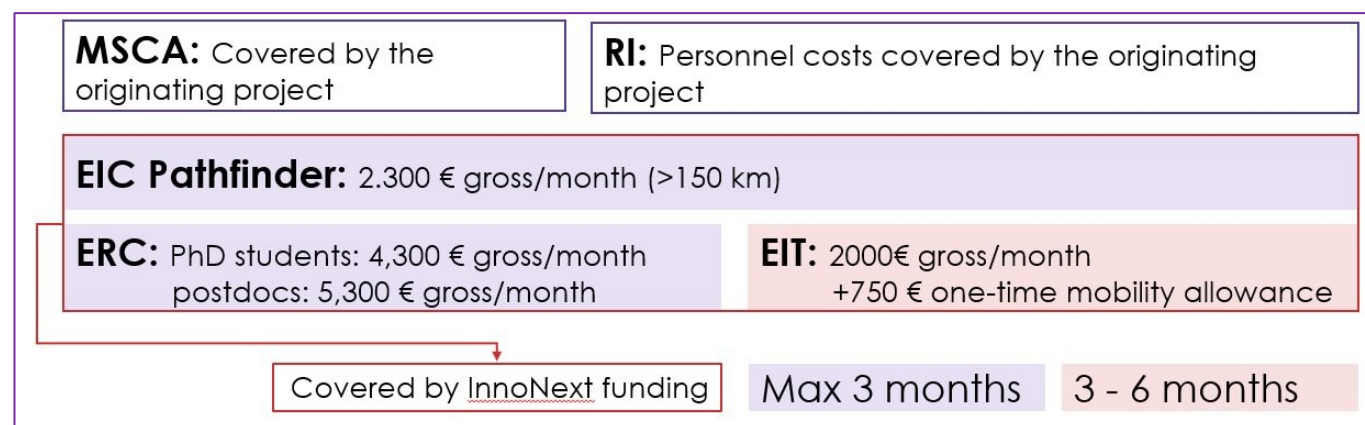


Figure 35 - Financial Support in InnoNext Initiative

Below is the current number of beneficiaries validated for Third-Party Financial Support.

**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 17 - FSTP beneficiaries (Data source: Financial Agreement Signed, 16<sup>th</sup> October 2025)

Programme Beneficiaries of FSTP procedure	M9	M12	M15
EIC Pathfinder (Mobility Allowance)	0	0	0
EIT Beneficiaries (Reimbursement)	0	42	97
EIT Mobility	0	20	45
ERC beneficiaries (Reimbursement)	0	3	8



A significant growth of EIT beneficiaries was recorded in just six months, demonstrating strong interest and engagement in the InnoNext initiative. The target for EIT beneficiaries (80 internships activated by October 2025) was successfully reached and even exceeded, with more than 90 internships involving EIT Talents.

The strong response from the programme made it possible to test and implement the InnoNext Scheme, while also providing valuable insights to strengthen and enhance the engagement of all EU PPs beneficiaries.

#### 4.3.6 Tutoring

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

KPI	<b>KPI3.6: Intern Satisfaction (on a Likert scale)</b>
Monitoring	<b>at least 75% express 4 out of 5</b>
	<b>KPI3.7: Company Satisfaction (on a Likert scale)</b>
	<b>at least 75% express 4 out of 5</b>

**The tutoring activities include several actions aimed not only at gathering insights into the beneficiaries' experience with InnoNext but also at fostering a human-centred 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 informed future actions and potential updates to the platform.

### Email Volume & Response Rates

Between M12 and M15, the team processed a total of **6,369 incoming emails** and initiated **4,057 outgoing communications** across the project period. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) confirm the team’s ability to manage this high volume efficiently, achieving an average estimated **Response Rate consistently above 97%** and a rapid average Median Response Time of approximately 5.5 hours.

The performance metrics below are calculated by **excluding internal communications** and **automated system notifications** (estimated at between 2% and 10% of total received volume, depending on the mailbox), which do not require a dedicated human reply. This methodology ensures the KPIs accurately reflect the team’s efficiency in addressing actionable stakeholder queries.

*Table 18 - Email Volume & Response Rates (Data source: Mailinbox Database, July 2025)*

Mailbox	Emails Received	Emails Sent	Response Rate (%)	Avg. Response Time	Median Response Time
info@	1141	678	97.0%	18.4 h	5.5 h
talents@	1263	1325	98.0%	20.2 h	4.3 h
companies@	2178	839	96.8%	26.8 h	8.1 h
administration@	1787	1215	98.2%	15.2 h	4.1 h

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

### Interpretation of Core Metrics

- **High Response Rate (Above 96%)**: The consistently high Response Rate across all mailboxes confirms that the team successfully processes virtually every actionable query received from external stakeholders, demonstrating high diligence and quality control in communication management.
- **Rapid Median Response Time**: The Median Response Time figures (ranging from 4.1 h to 8.1 h) show that 50% of all emails are addressed within half to one working day. This is crucial for stakeholder satisfaction, particularly for the administrative and talent-facing mailboxes.



- **Average vs. Median Time:** The variance between the Median and Average Response Times (e.g., 4.1 h median vs. 15.2 h average for administration@) is a natural outcome of managing complex communication. It indicates that while routine inquiries are handled rapidly (Median), a minority of complex cases - often requiring internal consultation across departments (finance, legal, talent matching) - require longer investigation and resolution, thus increasing the average time.

### Operational Performance Trends (Post M12 - July 2025)

The period following the last reported update (post-July 2025) corresponds to the most intensive phase of talent-company matching and InnoNext implementation. Analysis of the recent data confirms the sustained high-level performance of the InnoNext team during this period of peak complexity:

- **Sustained Service Quality:** Response Rates for critical mailboxes, such as administration@ and talents@, have remained stable, continuing to operate above the 98% threshold. This stability during peak activity demonstrates the team's capacity to scale its effort without compromising service quality.
- **Proactive Engagement:** The talents@ mailbox exhibits an exceptional characteristic: Emails Sent (1,325) exceed Emails Received (1,263). This imbalance highlights the team's proactive communication strategy, which involves initiating contact to guide candidates through eligibility, documentation, and the final onboarding process, thereby minimising delays and reliance on reactive responses.
- **Efficient Administrative Closure:** The administration@ mailbox maintains the shortest median response time (4.1 hours), ensuring that time-sensitive financial and legal inquiries are managed with maximum efficiency, which is vital for the smooth progress of the grant execution phase.

The quantified data confirms that the tutoring structure and the performance of the InnoNext Team are robust and highly effective. The consistently high Response Rates and rapid Median Response Times across all communication channels demonstrate a **strong commitment to facilitating project activities** and providing timely, professional support to all participants and partners.

Throughout the implementation of the InnoNext Tutoring activity, **key insights** and recurring challenges were identified, providing useful input for future improvements in project coordination and beneficiary support.

#### 1. Administrative Process and Documentation - Estimated frequency: 45%

Administrative support represented a significant portion of the tutoring activity, particularly concerning the **signature process of agreements**. These steps often required multiple reminders and iterations due to document corrections or limited clarity about the process, despite the availability of user guides.



## 2. Eligibility Verification and User Clarity - Estimated frequency: 35%

The eligibility check proved to be one of the most crucial steps during the activation of the Internship. Several users show/expressed **uncertainty about eligibility requirements**, both regarding differences between EU PPs and the need to belong to an active funded project. In some cases, there were **requests from non-eligible programmes** wishing to join InnoNext.

## 3. Platform Usability and Technical Issues - Estimated frequency: 15%

Beneficiaries reported technical and user experience issues with the InnoNext platform. These included navigation challenges, difficulties during registration, and occasional system errors.

Additionally, users frequently **requested the possibility to view company profiles** or lists of available hosts directly within the platform, to foster a more proactive matching experience.

## 4. Visa and Regulatory Constraints - Estimated frequency: 5%

Visa-related issues emerged frequently, particularly in cases involving non-EU citizens. In some cases, specific visa types imposed **restrictions on the number of working hours allowed**, which directly influenced the scheduling and overall duration of the internship.

### Webinars

Between M12 and M15, a new **Info Session Webinar** was launched, organised as a single event addressing both VTs and HCs. The objective of the webinar was to reinforce an engagement action targeting potential beneficiaries and stakeholders, while also collecting questions and concerns from participants.

This webinar followed the two previous sessions held in May

Date	Session Title
May 12 <sup>th</sup> 2025	Talents Info Session
May 19 <sup>th</sup> 2025	Companies Info Session
October 08 <sup>th</sup> 2025	Talents and Companies Info Session

The Info Session Webinar of 08<sup>th</sup> October registered **66** participants, with **24** live viewers. These numbers were lower than those recorded for the two webinars held in May (400 registered participants and 200 live viewers). This outcome can be linked to the following factors:

- The completion of the EIT engagement period;
- The overlap with multiple proposal submission deadlines for PhD and PostDoc candidates;
- The need to further strengthen the communication activity.



An **automatic recall system** was tested, including the option for participants to add the event directly to their personal calendars, to increase event reminders and attendance.

A follow-up recall was also conducted after the webinar, offering participants the opportunity to **schedule 1-to-1 meetings** to further clarify specific aspects of the InnoNext initiative. National Contact Points (NCPs) were directly invited to the webinar, with the goal of providing a deeper understanding of the InnoNext initiative and fostering its dissemination through their networks.

### 4.3.7 Mentoring

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

<b>KPI Monitoring</b>	<b>KPI3.6: Intern Satisfaction (on a Likert scale)</b> <b>at least 75% express 4 out of 5</b> <b>KPI3.7: Company Satisfaction (on a Likert scale)</b> <b>at least 75% express 4 out of 5</b>
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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, and three of them have already been completed:

Date	Workshop Title	Duration	Registered participants	Live Viewers
May 30 <sup>th</sup> 2025	Cultivating an Entrepreneurial Mindset	186 minutes	30	27
July 4 <sup>th</sup> 2025	Lean Startup & Agile Principles	183 minutes	29	28
September 4 <sup>th</sup> 2025	Product Development	170 minutes	97	47
November 4 <sup>th</sup> 2025	Growth & Scalability Strategies	-	-	-

To monitor the effectiveness of the workshops 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.

### **Davide Rovera Synthetic Bio**

The workshops are managed by Davide Rovera, who 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.

### **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?"*

## **September 4th, 2025 – Product Development**

The third workshop, *Product Development*, was held on **September 4th, 2025**, and lasted **170 minutes**.

A total of **97 participants registered**, with **84 confirmed registrations** and **47 attendees**, resulting in a **participation rate of 56%**.

Participants came from diverse geographical areas, confirming the international engagement of the InnoNext Community. The session focused on the key stages of developing a product from concept to market launch, emphasising practical tools for validating product ideas and aligning them with customer needs.

This was a **particularly interactive session**, thanks to the high number of participants and the instructor's efforts to engage them through direct questions and exchanges. The workshop concluded with personalised support from the instructor and an exchange of contacts on LinkedIn, which also led to further questions and follow-up discussions in the days following the event.

### **Post Workshop Survey**

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:

#### **1. Overall Satisfaction & Content Relevance for 3 workshops**

- All participants rated the workshop highly in terms of meeting their expectations, with scores of 4.2 out of 5.
- It can also be observed that there has been a **progressive increase in overall satisfaction**, reflected not only in the **steady participation rate across the workshops**, but also in the **positive perception of the content delivered**. Participants have shown growing appreciation for the **relevance, clarity, and practical value** of the sessions, which effectively support both Talents and Companies in strengthening their entrepreneurial mindset and innovation capabilities.



Figure 36 - Post-workshop satisfaction survey

## 2. Presenter Evaluation: Davide Rovera

- Davide Rovera received top marks (4.2 out of 5) for three workshops his presentation effectiveness and ability to engage the audience.



### Feedback from the third workshop

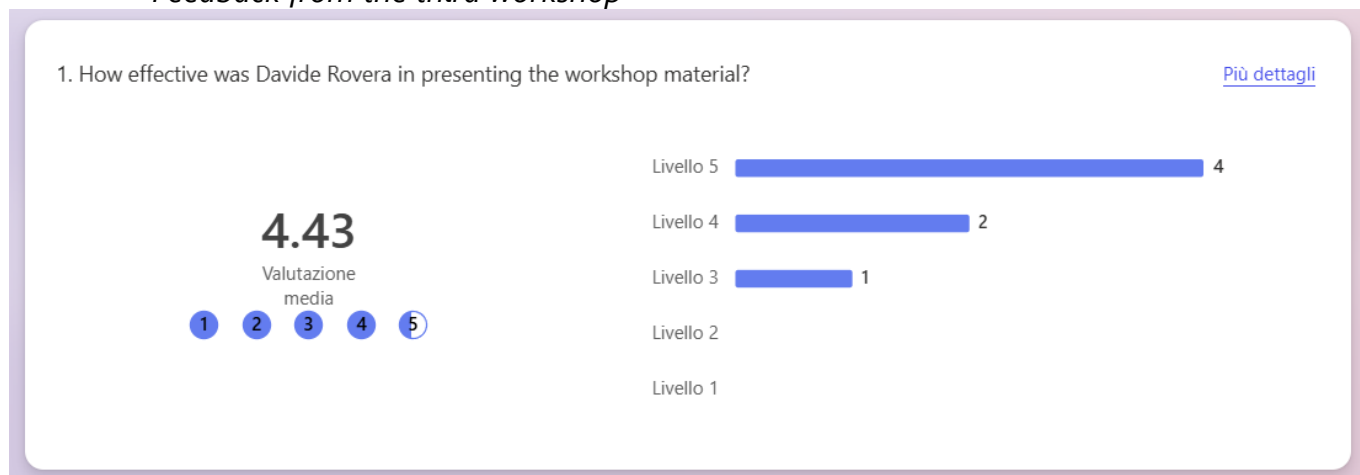


Figure 37 – Post-workshop satisfaction survey -

### 3. Impact on Participants

- All respondents felt better equipped to apply - Cultivating an Entrepreneurial Mindset, Lean Startup & Agile Principles and Product Development, after attending the workshop (all rated 4,2 out of 5).
- 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 commercialisation.

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 valorisation.



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

Table 19 - Participants in the Third Workshop

Declared Role	Count
Visiting Talents	15
Hosting Companies	82

Table 20 - Participants in the Third Workshop per Programme

Affiliate Program for VT	Count
EIT Alumni Member	18
Research Infrastructures	3
EIT Label Masters and Doctoral Programmes	34
EIC Pathfinder	5
EIC Transition	2
ERC	3
EIT Community	15
MSCA COFUND	2
Affiliate Program for HC	Count
EIT Alumni Member	4
EIC Accelerator	6
EIC Seal of Excellence	3
Receiving support from KICs	2

#### 4.3.8 Survey

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

<b>KPI</b>	<b>KPI3.6: Intern Satisfaction (on a Likert scale)</b>
<b>Monitoring</b>	<b>at least 75% express 4 out of 5</b>
	<b>KPI3.7: Company Satisfaction (on a Likert scale)</b>
	<b>at least 75% express 4 out of 5</b>

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. For a detailed overview see the *Annex 2 – Pre Internship Survey Overview*.

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 21 – Survey and Self-Assessment collected up to July 2025

Survey Indicators	
VTs with a confirmed Internship	97
VT Survey Pre Internship Compiled (the survey will be send when the Innovation Internship Agreement will be signed)	97
HC Survey Pre Internship Compiled (the survey will be send when the Innovation Internship Agreement will be signed)	28
VTs and HCs which completed the self-assessment survey	125

### Insight:

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 *6.2 Annex 2 – Pre Internship Survey Overview*.

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

### For Visiting Talents:

- **Communication and Outreach:** Most participants (64% - 63/97 answers) learned about InnoNext through direct communication from EU PPs, confirming the effectiveness of institutional channels. Professional and personal networks also played a key role, while social media and events had a minor impact.
- **Motivations:** Participation is mainly career- and innovation-driven. Respondents joined to apply scientific knowledge, collaborate with start-ups, and gain hands-on experience in technology transfer and commercialisation.
- **Entrepreneurial Outlook:** Entrepreneurial interest is very high: 74% have already started developing, or are considering a business project, showing strong potential for future entrepreneurship.
- **User Experience:** The registration and platform experience were rated highly positive — over 75% found them easy or very easy — with only minor areas for improvement.



- **Platform Use and Support:** The most visited section is “Internship Opportunities” (85%), confirming career focus. Email is the main communication channel with the team, and overall satisfaction is excellent — 86% rated the support “Good” to “Excellent”.

For Hosting Companies:

- **Communication and Awareness:** Most participants (67% - 19/28 answers) learned about InnoNext through direct communications from EU PPs, confirming the strong influence of institutional channels. Personal networks and social media played a secondary role, while events and project referrals had little or no impact.
- **Motivations to Join:** The main drivers were access to a qualified talent pool and fully funded internship opportunities, showing that both companies and participants are primarily attracted by practical collaboration and funding mechanisms. Secondary motivations included knowledge transfer, network expansion, and idea exploration.
- **Skills and Support Needs:** Respondents mainly identified a need for technical and innovation-related skills, followed by market understanding and project management. Legal, administrative, and communication skills were mentioned less frequently.
- **User Experience:** Feedback on the registration process and document integration was largely positive: around 75–80% found the steps easy or very easy. Only a small minority encountered minor challenges, mostly related to document upload formats.
- **Internship Process and Platform Use:** The internship activation process was rated positively by 79% of respondents, confirming clarity and good communication. Users found the FAQ section most useful (61%), followed by internship listings and resources, indicating a preference for practical, informative content.
- **Communication with the InnoNext Team:** Email was the dominant contact method (used by 24 respondents), confirming a preference for direct and personal communication over automated channels like forms or social media.
- **Support and Satisfaction:** 89% rated the InnoNext team’s support as good to excellent, highlighting professionalism, responsiveness, and effective guidance as key strengths.
- **Mentoring Preferences:** Interest focused mainly on interactive formats: 43% preferred online workshops or group mentoring, while 39% were not interested in mentoring activities. This suggests potential to expand engagement through more dynamic, collaborative learning options.

#### 4.3.9 Success Stories

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

KPI	<b>KPI3.6: Intern Satisfaction (on a Likert scale)</b>
Monitoring	at least 75% express 4 out of 5
	<b>KPI3.7: Company Satisfaction (on a Likert scale)</b>
	at least 75% express 4 out of 5



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 did the platform support you**
2. **How the process went**
3. **What are your expectations 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.

*Table 22 - Success Stories Collected*

Beneficiary	M12	M15
VT Success Stories	9	14
HC Success Stories	2	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 23 - 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, the matching process, and the 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 emphasise the value of long-term capacity building.

*Table 24 - 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 emphasise 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 finalising 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 has been designed and is currently being implemented, including the goal of increasing awareness of European programmes and related funding opportunities.

Table 25 - SMART definition of Obj. 4 (as defined in the first release of the D4.3)

<b>S</b>	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.
<b>M</b>	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: <b>OA1 The InnoNext scheme</b> <b>OA2 Talents database</b> <b>OA3 Replication and upscaling toolkit</b>
<b>A</b>	Implement tailored communication strategies and campaigns to effectively reach and inform research talents and hosting companies within the project's scope.
<b>R</b>	This objective supports the achievement of the call's expected outcome: <b>EO3 Increased visibility of EU funding programmes</b>
<b>T</b>	It is achieved by WP4 " <b>Promotion and Impact Assessment</b> " from M4 to M21.

The actions undertaken between M12 & M15 can be summarised as follows:

### Presentations within the EU innovation ecosystem

Table 26 – Overview of Events attended and organized between M12 and M15

Event	When	Hosted by	Description	Tool
InnoNext InfoSession	08 <sup>th</sup> October 2025	InnoNext	A Webinar dedicated to InnoNext potential beneficiaries and stakeholders	Zoom Webinar



## Communication actions featuring cross-programme content.

In particular, the articles in the Table 27 were published highlighting the integration and cross-pollination between programmes

An example is related to EIT integration within the InnoNext ecosystem and **disseminated through EIC and EIT communication channels**. These actions fostered mutual awareness and understanding among beneficiaries of the different EU programmes.

In the most recent (M15) communication activities, the theme of **cross-pollination**, the interaction between programmes facilitated through InnoNext, has been highlighted. This approach helps to better understand the multifaceted nature of the European innovation ecosystem, particularly through the success stories collected from beneficiaries and featured in the project's communication activities.

Table 27 - Cross pollination and integration between EU PPs in InnoNext Dissemination (M1-M15)

Article	Platform	Topic	Link
InnoNext Opens Doors for EIT Talent and Startups Across Europe (24 April 2025)	EIT Europe News page	Cross programme Content	<a href="https://www.eit.europa.eu/news-events/news/innonext-opens-doors-eit-talent-and-startups-across-europe">https://www.eit.europa.eu/news-events/news/innonext-opens-doors-eit-talent-and-startups-across-europe</a>
Open call – Take the leap from research to entrepreneurship with InnoNext (05 June 2025)	EIC Community	Cross programme Content	<a href="https://eic.eisma.eu/community/stories/open-call-take-leap-research-entrepreneurship-innonext">https://eic.eisma.eu/community/stories/open-call-take-leap-research-entrepreneurship-innonext</a>
The InnoNext platform in action: a space to explore Europe's innovation landscape (15 October 2025)	EIC Community	Cross pollination Content	<a href="https://eic.eisma.eu/community/stories/innonext-platform-action-a-space-explore-europes-innovation-landscape">https://eic.eisma.eu/community/stories/innonext-platform-action-a-space-explore-europes-innovation-landscape</a>

## Public Deliverables

By Month 12, all deliverables foreseen for the InnoNext initiative had been published. With the exception of one document containing sensitive information, all deliverables were made publicly available and can be accessed through the InnoNext project page on the EU portal. The deliverables also serve a strong dissemination function, particularly those related to the implementation of the InnoNext Scheme (D3.1 and its subsequent versions) and the current one, focused on project monitoring and progress tracking (D4.3 and its subsequent versions).



## Creation of relevant content in the communication materials

Communication includes 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 28 – Action performed between M12 and M15

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
Update of a dedicated media kit for each EU PPs and for Key Stakeholders (NCPs)	
Press Release	D4.2 - Report on Communication and Dissemination Action
Mapping of key actors in the Italian and European innovation ecosystem	
Talents Reactivation Campaign	(see section 4.1.1)
Info Session Webinar on October 08 <sup>th</sup> inviting key stakeholders (NCPs)	(see section 4.3.6)

### 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	M15
Events in which the InnoNext Initiative has been presented	6	12	13
Articles published on EIC Community Platform;	2	3	7
Posts on EISMEA channels (LinkedIn & X);	2	2	2**
Articles published on the EIT Official Website	1	1	2**
Posts on EIT Channels (LinkedIn & X)	2	3	4**
InnoNext LinkedIn Posts	22	41	55
InnoNext X Posts	7	41	33
InnoNext Press Release	-	28	32

\*\* Between M12 and M15, the **Media Kit for EU PPs has been updated** to include the dissemination of the Info Session Webinar opportunity. The contents can be customised 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 Steps

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 29 – 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	Identify and introduce elements that make participation in InnoNext more appealing to PhD and PostDoc profiles, ensuring that the benefits derived from the experience are both tangible and linked to measurable personal and professional skill development.	
	A1.4	<b>Refine the status system</b> to ensure that only beneficiaries effectively ready to start the administrative flow remain under the <i>selected</i> status, while maintaining records of those who validated a match and completed the interview phase but did not activate an internship within the InnoNext initiative.	
OBJ2	A2.1	Revision of the InnoNext Beneficiaries Journey on the Platform and eventual upgrade	KPI2.3: ≥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
	A2.2	Continuous development of the matchmaking process	KPI2.1: 3000+ number of talents/businesses discovered



			<p>KPI2.2: perform matches with internships in less than 1 second</p> <p>KPI2.3: <math>\geq 90\%</math> top-5 accuracy of the matches proposed against manually selected options</p>
OBJ3	A3.1	<p><b>Reactivation Campaign:</b> Systematization of the activity tested in September aimed at reactivating dormant users on the platform, with the objective of better understanding their needs and potential obstacles and implementing corrective actions to improve the overall user experience within InnoNext.</p>	<p>KPI3.1: 600+ internships in 2 years</p> <p>KPI3.2: 150+ interns from EIC Pathfinder</p> <p>KPI3.3: 300+ deep tech internships</p> <p>KPI3.4: 300+ aspiring innovator internships</p> <p>KPI3.5: <math>\geq 50\%</math> 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> <p>KPI3.7: Company Satisfaction (on a Likert scale) at least 75% express 4 out of 5</p>
	A3.2	<p><b>Engagement Strategy:</b> Update of the Communication Plan with the objective of introducing greater message segmentation and verticalization towards specific target groups, in order to deliver messages that make participation in InnoNext more appealing. The campaign will also introduce the use of <b>Testimonials/Success stories</b> as a tool to illustrate the benefits of participating in InnoNext, while <b>enhancing the activities that make the initiative distinctive and competitive</b>, such as tutoring, mentoring, and onboarding support. Additionally, a <b>dedicated engagement strategy</b></p>	<p>KPI2.1: 3000+ number of talents/businesses discovered</p> <p>KPI3.1: 600+ internships in 2 years</p> <p>KPI3.2: 150+ interns from EIC Pathfinder</p> <p>KPI3.3: 300+ deep tech internships</p> <p>KPI3.4: 300+ aspiring innovator internships</p> <p>KPI3.5: <math>\geq 50\%</math> of the InnoNext budget</p>



		will be defined for each EU programme, to be discussed and validated with the respective programme representatives.	allocated to support internships
	<b>A3.3</b>	<b>Further testing and identification of potential elements to enhance the user experience and interaction between the two beneficiary groups</b> (e.g. assessing the possibility of introducing a list of companies available on the platform, allowing users to focus not only on specific opportunities but also on the characteristics of the companies themselves).	KPI2.1: 3000+ number of talents/businesses discovered 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
	<b>A3.4</b>	<b>Strengthening Stakeholder Engagement</b> and the InnoNext networks with the aim to disseminate the opportunity through different channel (e.g. NCPs)	KPI2.1: 3000+ number of talents/businesses discovered KPI3.1: 600+ internships in 2 years KPI3.2: 150+ interns from EIC Pathfinder KPI3.5: ≥50% of the InnoNext budget allocated to support internships
	<b>A3.5</b>	Conduct an <b>in-depth analysis of companies hosting multiple Innovation Internships</b> , with a particular focus on those with a high number of activations. The objective is to identify the conditions and factors that have facilitated successful matches and internship activations, in order to replicate these good practices across the InnoNext community.	KPI3.1: 600+ internships in 2 years KPI3.5: ≥50% of the InnoNext budget allocated to support internships KPI3.7: Company Satisfaction (on a Likert scale) at least 75% express 4 out of 5
<b>OBJ4</b>	<b>A4.1</b>	<b>Introduction of video interviews</b> to give voice to InnoNext beneficiaries who have completed their internship, with the aim of creating communication tools that place people at the centre of the narrative.	KPI4.1: +20% awareness of EU funding programmes KPI4.2: +20% appreciation of EU funding programmes



	<b>A4.2</b>	Introduction of <b>periodic and cyclical Webinar</b> to create a scheduled and repetitive appointment with InnoNext.	KPI2.1: 3000+ number of talents/businesses discovered KPI4.1: +20% awareness of EU funding programmes KPI4.2: +20% appreciation of EU funding programmes
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## 6. Annexes

### 6.1. Annexe 1 - 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' feedback is an important element to determine and guide the strategic approach through the iterative process of the InnoNext Scheme shape.

#	Questions	Date	Channel	Writer role	Program	Topic
3	Hello, We are considering signing up as a hosting company for the program. However, the <b>optimal time for the intern would be 6-12 months from now.</b> 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, <b>received a Seal of Excellence some years ago for a project.</b> 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 <b>documents or requirements are necessary for registration and</b>		Email	company		application

Figure 38 – Q&A database from beneficiaries collected through direct email



## 6.2. Annex 2 – Pre Internship Survey Overview

### VTs Pre Internship Survey

#### How did you find out about the InnoNext initiative?

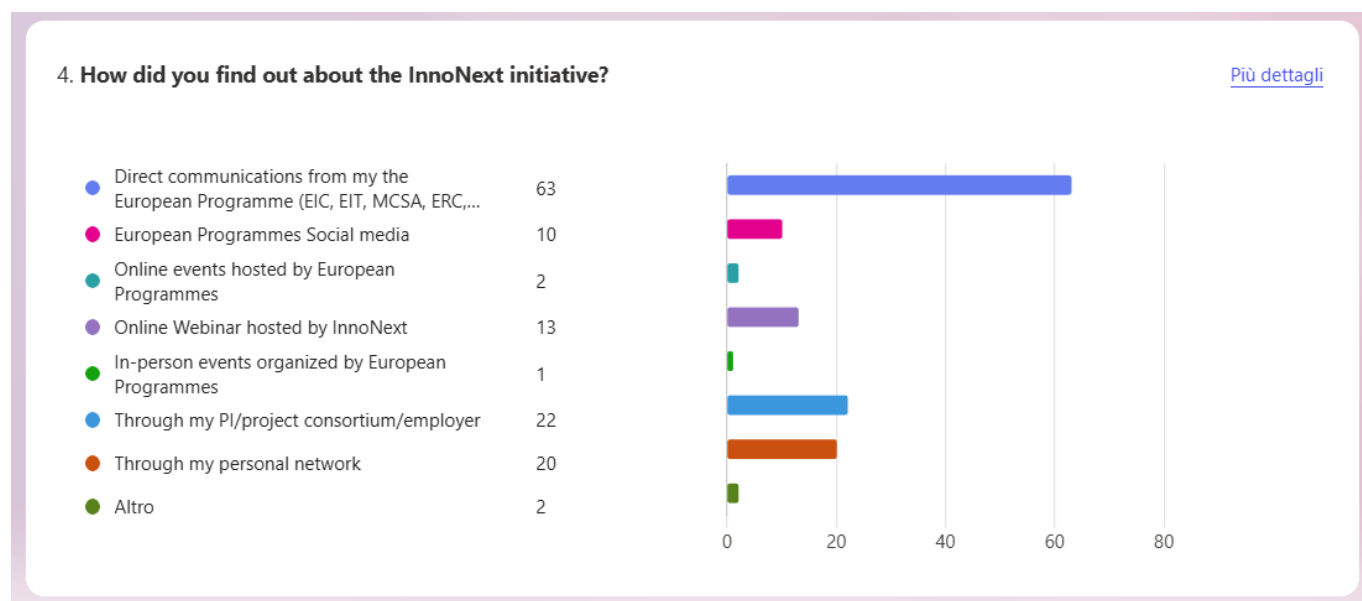


Figure 39 - Talent Pre-Internship Survey (October 2025)

- Direct outreach from **European Programmes** is by far the dominant communication channel, cited by 63 respondents — more than half of all participants. This clearly underscores the effectiveness and trust placed in formal, institutional communication as the primary driver of engagement with the InnoNext initiative.
- Referrals through **PIs, project consortia, or employers** (22 responses), together with personal networks (20 responses), also play a significant role, suggesting that professional word-of-mouth and internal project communication are key mechanisms for spreading information within the research and innovation community.
- InnoNext-hosted **webinars** (13 responses) and **European Programmes' social media channels** (10 responses) contribute to visibility but remain secondary compared to direct and network-based communication.
- Finally, online and in-person events organised by European Programmes (2 and 1 responses respectively), along with a few "Other" mentions, appear to have a minimal impact on outreach — indicating that face-to-face or general public channels currently play a limited role in awareness-raising.



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

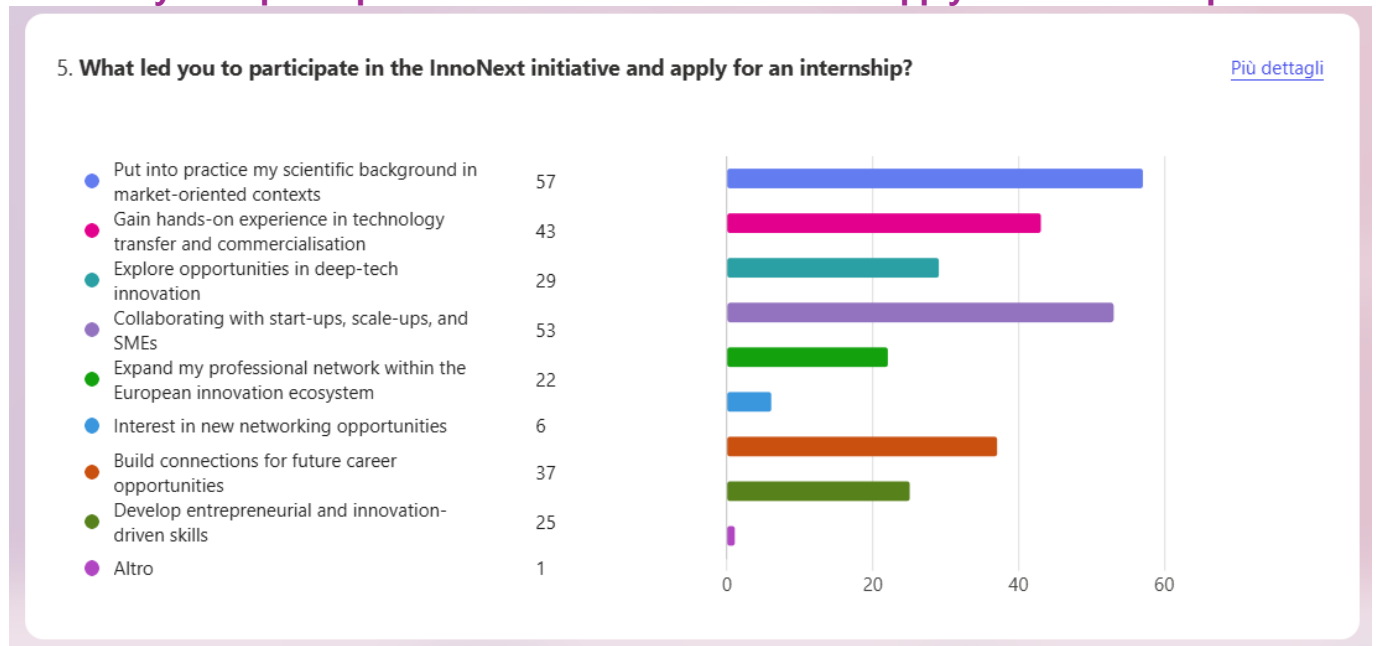


Figure 40 - Talent Pre-Internship Survey (October 2025)

- The main motivations driving participation in the **InnoNext initiative** are strongly career- and impact-oriented. The leading reasons are the **desire to apply scientific knowledge in market-oriented contexts (57 responses)** and the **opportunity to collaborate with start-ups, scale-ups, and SMEs (53 responses)**. This indicates that participants are eager to bridge the gap between research and real-world innovation environments.
- A significant portion of respondents also aim to **gain hands-on experience in technology transfer and commercialisation (43)** and to **build connections for future career opportunities (37)** — both pointing to a strong focus on employability and practical skill development.
- Exploring **deep-tech innovation (29)** and **developing entrepreneurial and innovation-driven skills (25)** also emerge as relevant motivations, highlighting an interest in more advanced, innovation-centric experiences.
- Expanding professional networks within the **European innovation ecosystem (22)** and a smaller group citing **interest in new networking opportunities (6)** show that while networking is valued, it is not the primary driver of engagement.



## Have you ever considered starting your own business project?

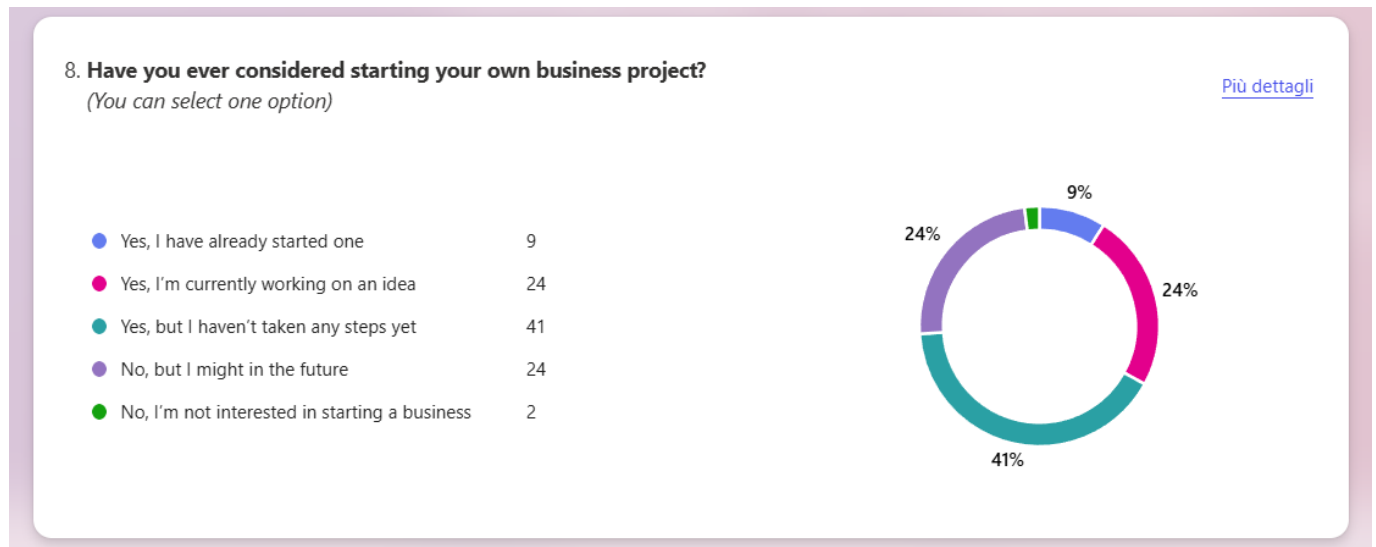


Figure 41 - Talent Pre-Internship Survey (October 2025)

- Entrepreneurial interest among respondents appears to be high. **Nearly three-quarters (74%)** of participants have either already started a business project, are working on an idea, or have at least considered doing so.
- Specifically, **41%** have thought about starting a business but **have not yet taken any concrete steps**, while **24%** are **currently working on an idea**, and **9%** have **already launched their own venture**. This suggests that many participants are at an early stage of entrepreneurial exploration, with strong potential for future business creation if given proper support and resources.
- An additional **24%** stated that they have not yet started a business but **might in the future**, reinforcing the notion of latent entrepreneurial intent within this group.
- Only **2 respondents** (representing **2%**) reported having **no interest in starting a business**, indicating that entrepreneurial thinking is widely present among InnoNext participants.



## How did you find the Registration form?

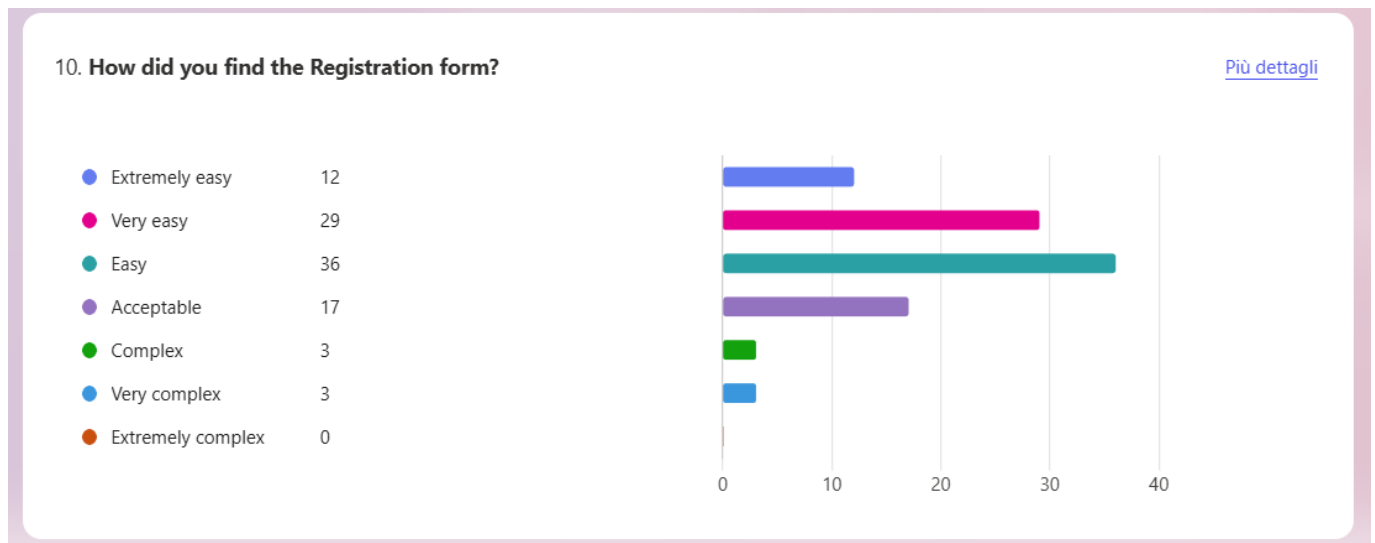


Figure 42 - Talent Pre-Internship Survey (october 2025)

- Respondents provided feedback on the registration form. **77% (77 out of 100)** found it "Easy," "Very easy," or "Extremely easy", indicating a highly positive user experience.
- 12% rated it "**Extremely easy**"
- 29% rated it "**Very easy**"
- 36% rated it "**Easy**"
- 17% considered the form "Acceptable", showing room for minor improvements.
- Only 6% found it "Complex" or "Very complex", and none rated it as "Extremely complex."



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

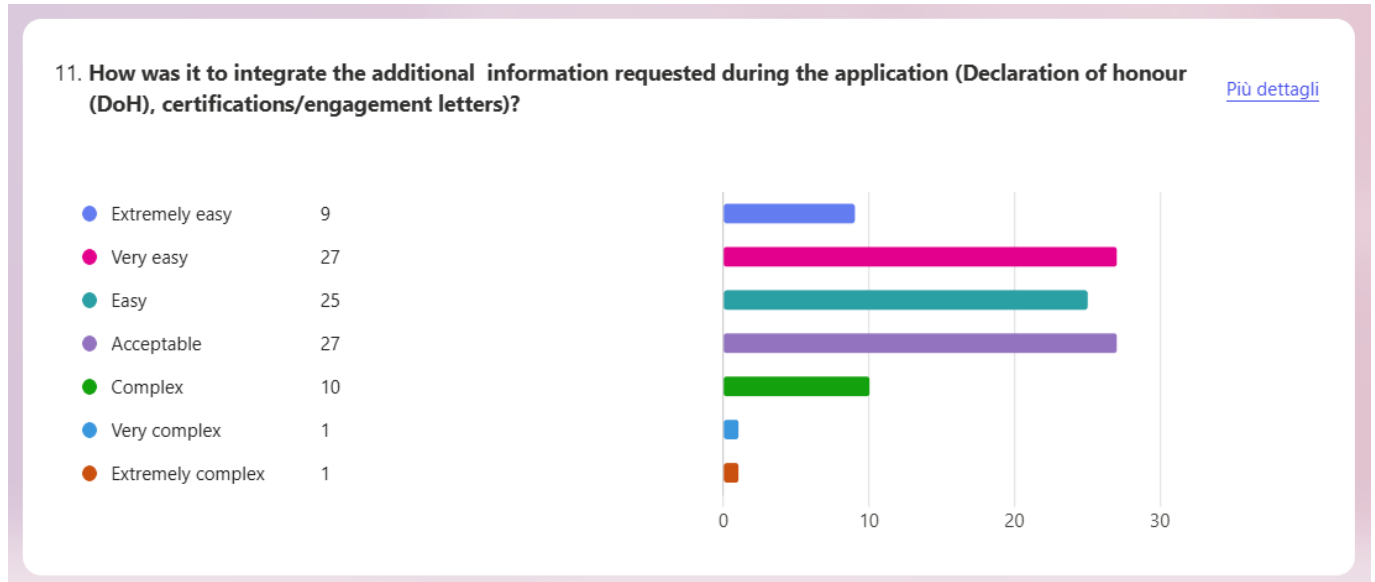


Figure 43 - Talent Pre-Internship Survey (October 2025)

- **61%** found the process “Easy,” “Very easy,” or “Extremely easy,” indicating that most users managed the requirement without major issues.
- 9% rated it “**Extremely easy**”
- 27% rated it “**Very easy**”
- 25% rated it “**Easy**”
- 27% considered it “Acceptable,” suggesting that for some participants, the process required a moderate effort.
- A smaller portion, 12%, experienced challenges — 10% found it “Complex,” 1% “Very complex,” and 1% “Extremely complex.”



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

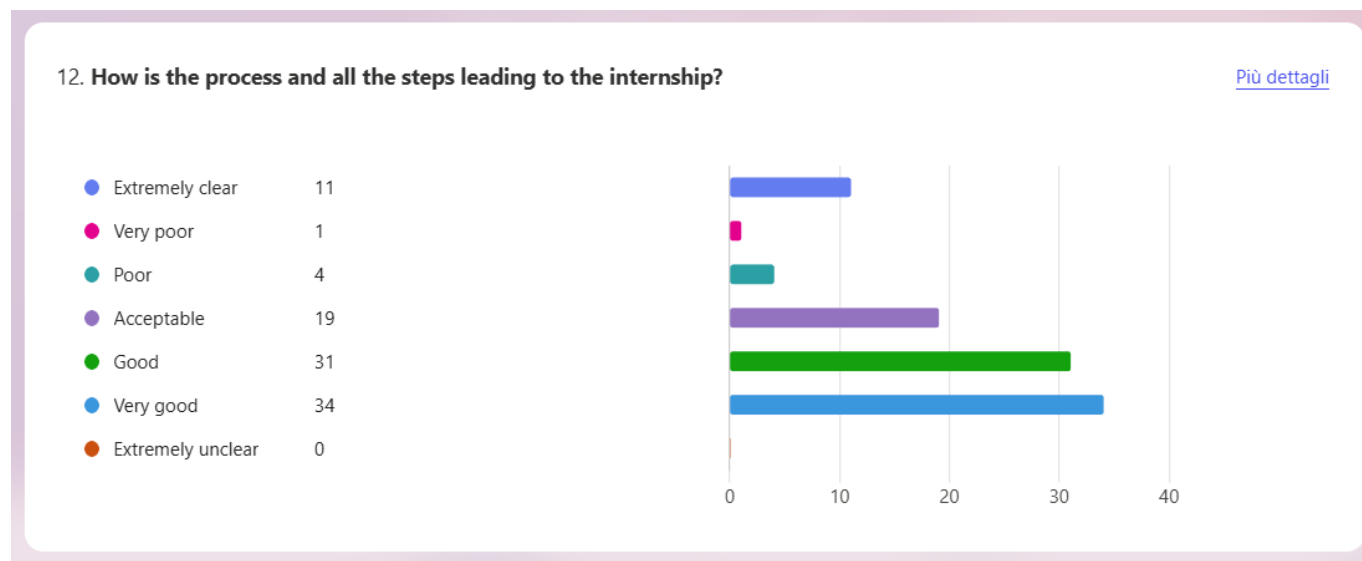


Figure 44 - Talent Pre-Internship Survey (October 2025)

- **76%** rated the process as “Good,” “Very good,” or “Extremely clear,” showing a high level of satisfaction and comprehension of the steps involved.
- 11% rated it “**Extremely clear**”
- 34% rated it “**Very good**”
- 31% rated it “**Good**”
- 19% considered the process “Acceptable,” indicating some need for additional guidance or clearer instructions.
- Only 5% expressed difficulties: 4% found it “Poor” and 1% “Very poor.” None rated it as “Extremely unclear.”



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

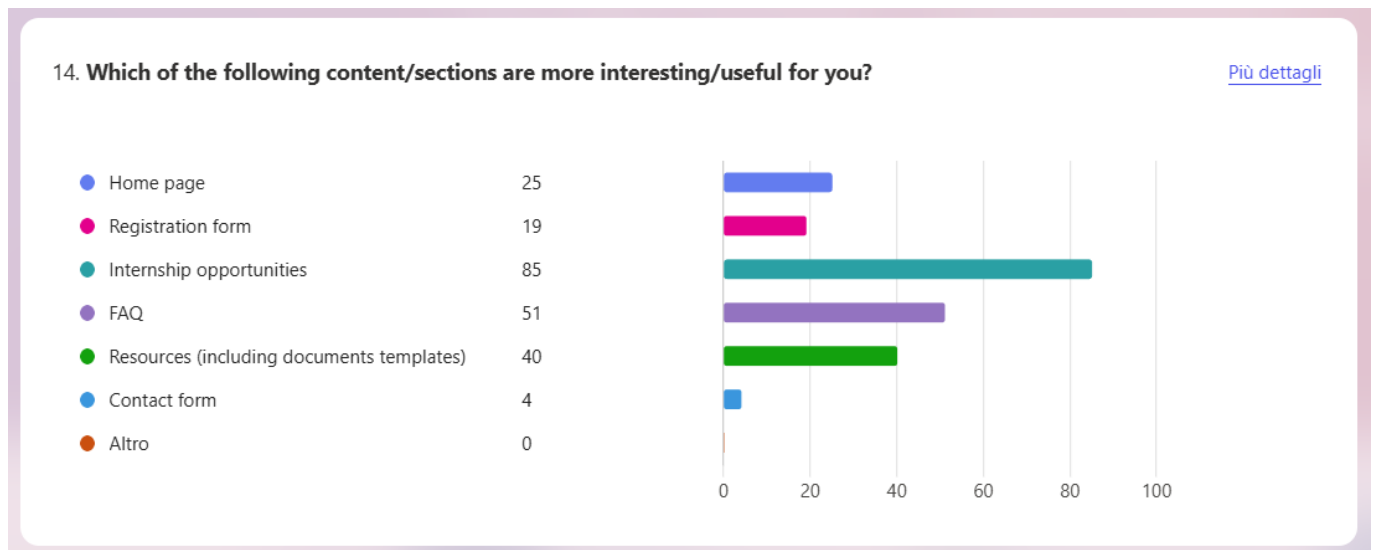


Figure 45 - Talent Pre-Internship Survey (July 2025)

A total of respondents indicated which sections of the platform they found most interesting or useful.

**The clear leader is “Internship opportunities,”** chosen by **85%** of respondents — confirming that users primarily access the platform to explore and apply for internship placements.

Other sections also received strong interest:

- FAQ: 51% — showing a high demand for clear, easily accessible information.
- Resources (including document templates): 40% — appreciated as practical tools to support the application process.
- Home page: 25% — valued for general navigation and first impressions.
- Registration form: 19% — useful but secondary once the registration is complete.
- Contact form: only 4%, indicating that most users find the platform sufficiently self-explanatory without needing to reach out directly.

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

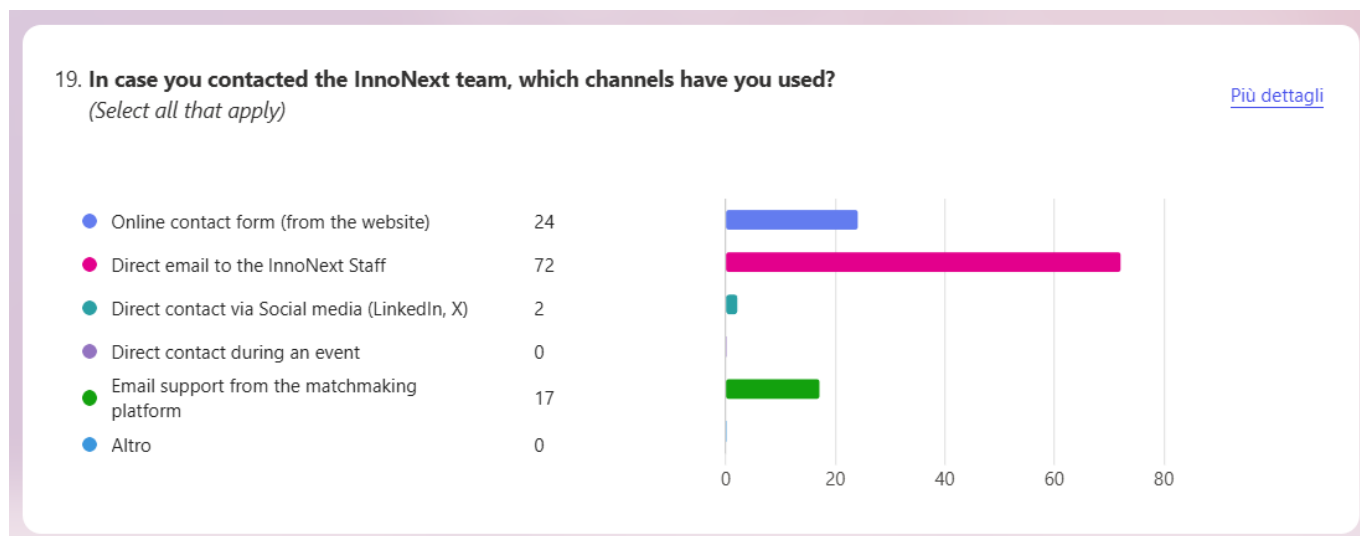


Figure 46 - Talent Pre-Internship Survey (October 2025)

Respondents were asked which communication channels they used to contact the InnoNext team (multiple answers allowed).

**Direct email contact with InnoNext staff** was by far the most common method, chosen by **72 respondents**, confirming that email remains the preferred and most effective communication channel.

Other channels were used to a lesser extent:

- Online contact form (from the website): 24 respondents
- Email support from the matchmaking platform: 17 respondents
- Direct contact via social media (LinkedIn, X): only 2 respondents
- Direct contact during an event: 0 respondents
- Other: 0 respondents



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

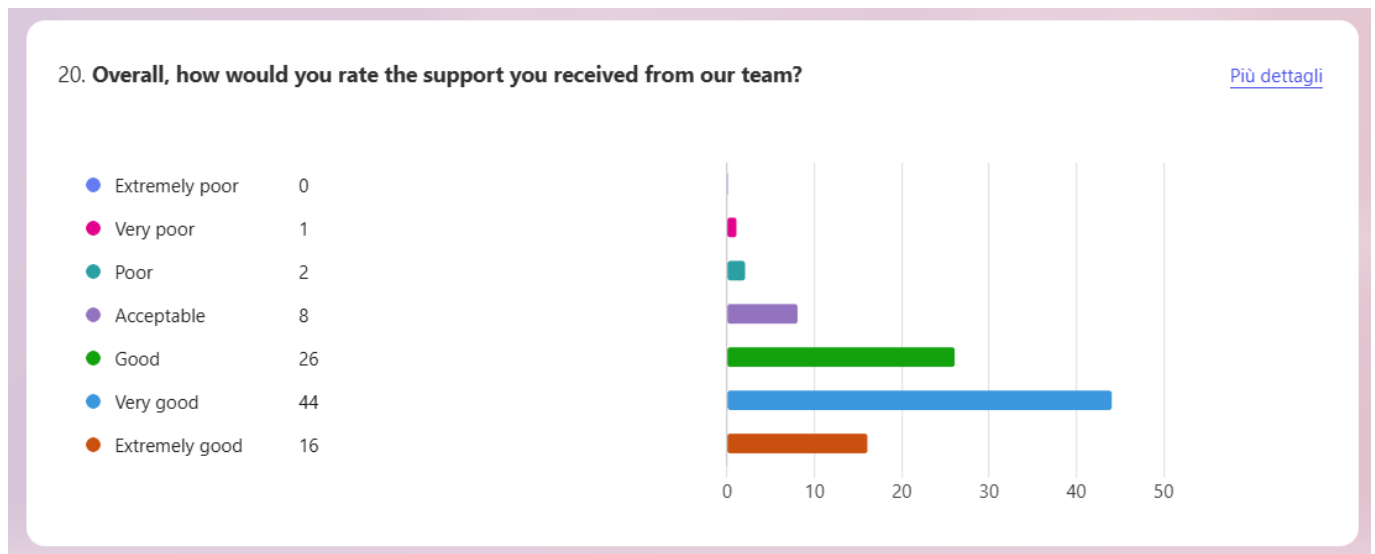


Figure 47 - Talent Pre-Internship Survey (October 2025)

A total of 97 respondents rated the overall support received from the InnoNext team. **86% (86 out of 97)** evaluated the support as “Good,” “Very good,” or “Extremely good,” confirming a strong level of satisfaction with the team’s responsiveness and assistance.

- **16%** rated it “**Extremely good**”
- **44%** rated it “**Very good**”
- **26%** rated it “**Good**”

A smaller group expressed neutral or slightly negative views:

- 8% considered the support “Acceptable”
- Only 3 respondents reported dissatisfaction — 2% “Poor” and 1% “Very poor”
- 0% rated it “Extremely poor.”

Overall, the feedback reflects a highly positive perception of the InnoNext support team, highlighting professionalism, availability, and effective communication as key strengths.

## HCs Pre Internship Survey

### How did you find out about the InnoNext initiative?

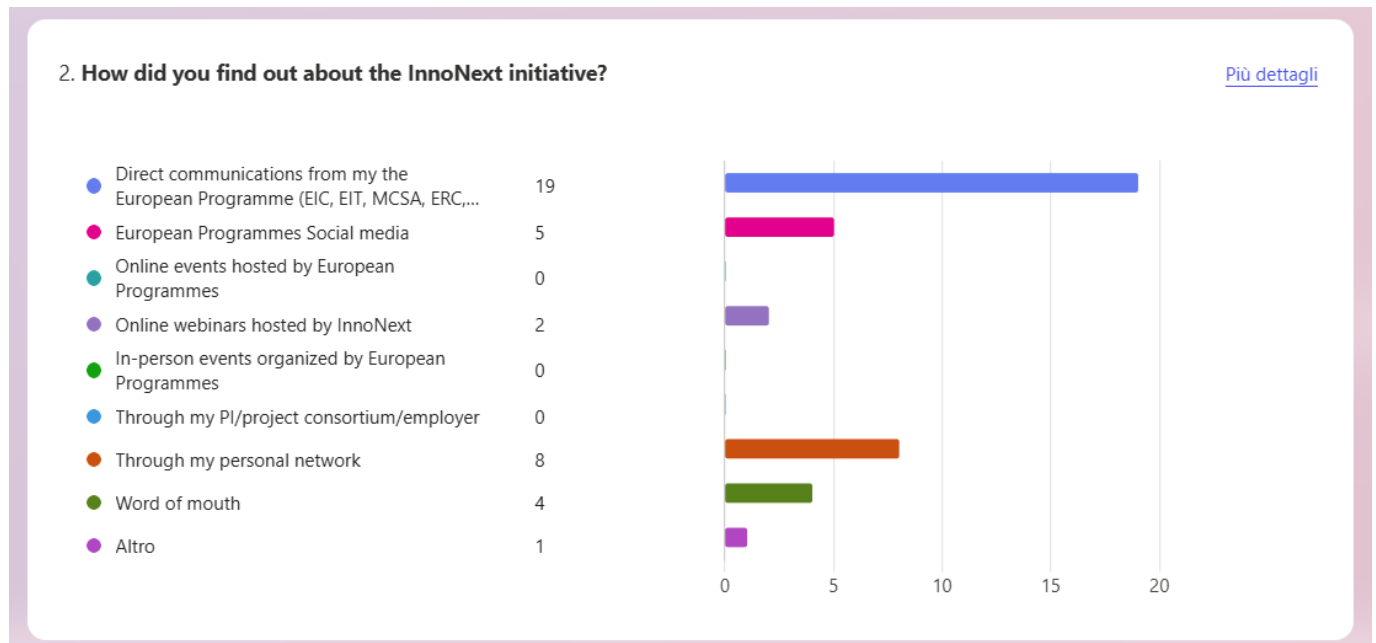


Figure 48 - Company Pre-Internship Survey (October 2025)

- **Direct communications from European Programmes (EIC, EIT, MSCA, ERC, etc.)** were the main source of awareness, cited by **19 respondents**, confirming the strong role of institutional channels.
- Other sources included:
  - Personal network: 8 respondents
  - European Programmes' social media: 5 respondents
  - Word of mouth: 4 respondents
  - Online webinars hosted by InnoNext: 2 respondents
- Other: 1 respondent
- No respondents reported learning about InnoNext through online or in-person events organized by European Programmes or via their PI/project consortium/employer.

Overall, these results show that official European communication channels are the most effective in reaching potential participants, while peer and personal networks also play a secondary but relevant role in spreading information about the initiative.



## What led you to participate in the InnoNext initiative?

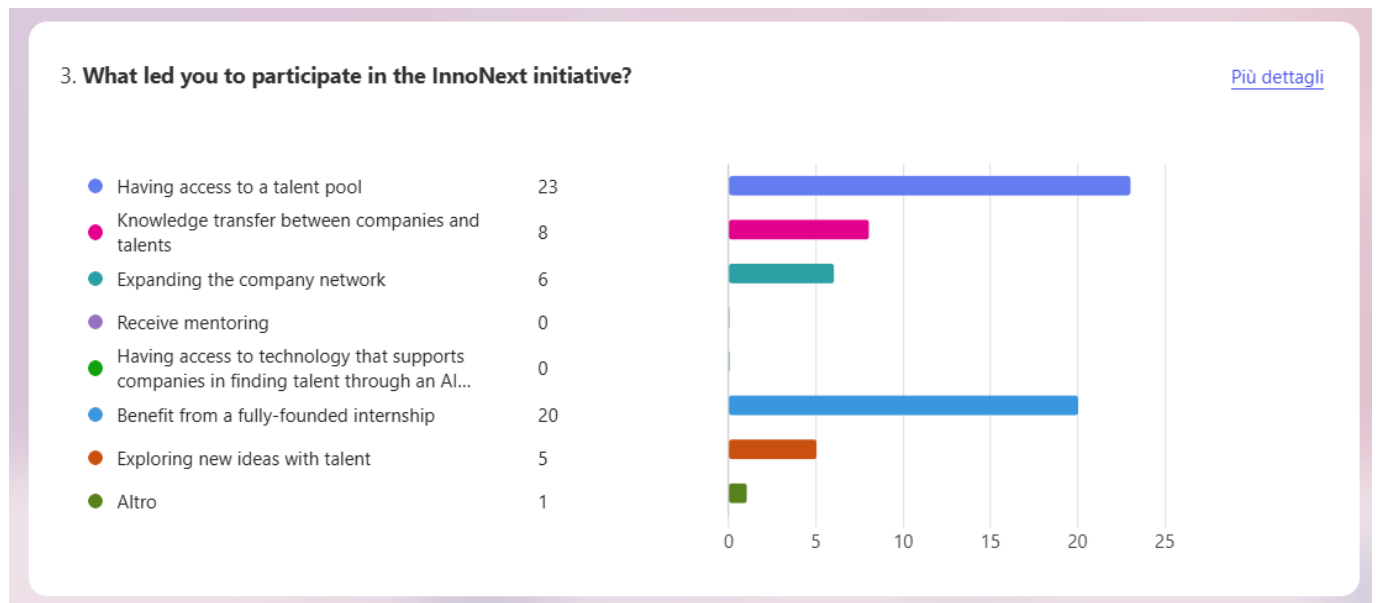


Figure 49 - Company Pre-Internship Survey (October 2025)

The main drivers were **access to a talent pool** and **the opportunity to benefit from a fully funded internship**, mentioned by **23** and **20 respondents**, respectively. These results highlight that both companies and talents are primarily attracted by the programme's **matching and financial support mechanisms**.

Other reasons included:

- **Knowledge transfer between companies and talents:** 8 respondents
- **Expanding the company network:** 6 respondents
- **Exploring new ideas with talent:** 5 respondents
- **Other motivations:** 1 respondent

No respondents selected mentoring or access to AI-based matching technology as key motivations.

Overall, the data suggests that participants are mainly motivated by concrete collaboration and recruitment opportunities, with secondary interest in networking and knowledge sharing.



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

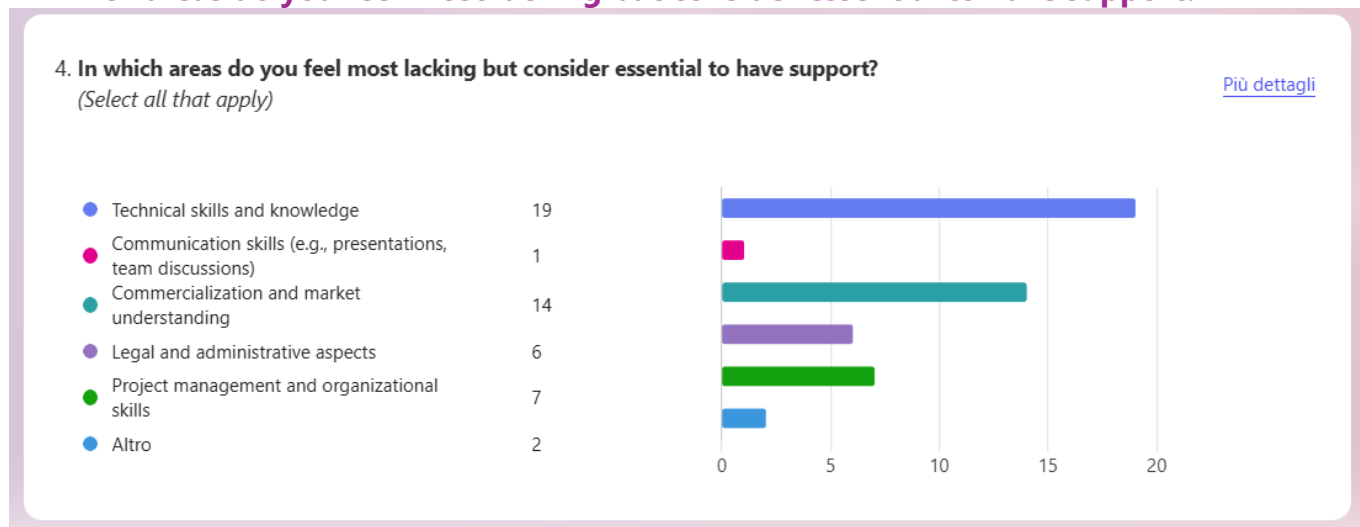


Figure 50 - Company Pre-Internship Survey (October 2025)

- The top need identified was for **technical skills and knowledge**, mentioned by **19 respondents**, confirming the importance of strengthening core competencies relevant to innovation and R&D.
- Other significant areas of support included:
  - **Commercialization and market understanding**: 14 respondents
  - **Project management and organizational skills**: 7 respondents
  - **Legal and administrative aspects**: 6 respondents
- Less frequently mentioned were:
  - **Communication skills (e.g., presentations, team discussions)**: 1 respondent

Overall, the data suggests that participants are primarily looking for practical and market-oriented capacity building, combining technical depth with stronger business and project management capabilities.



## How did you find the Registration form?

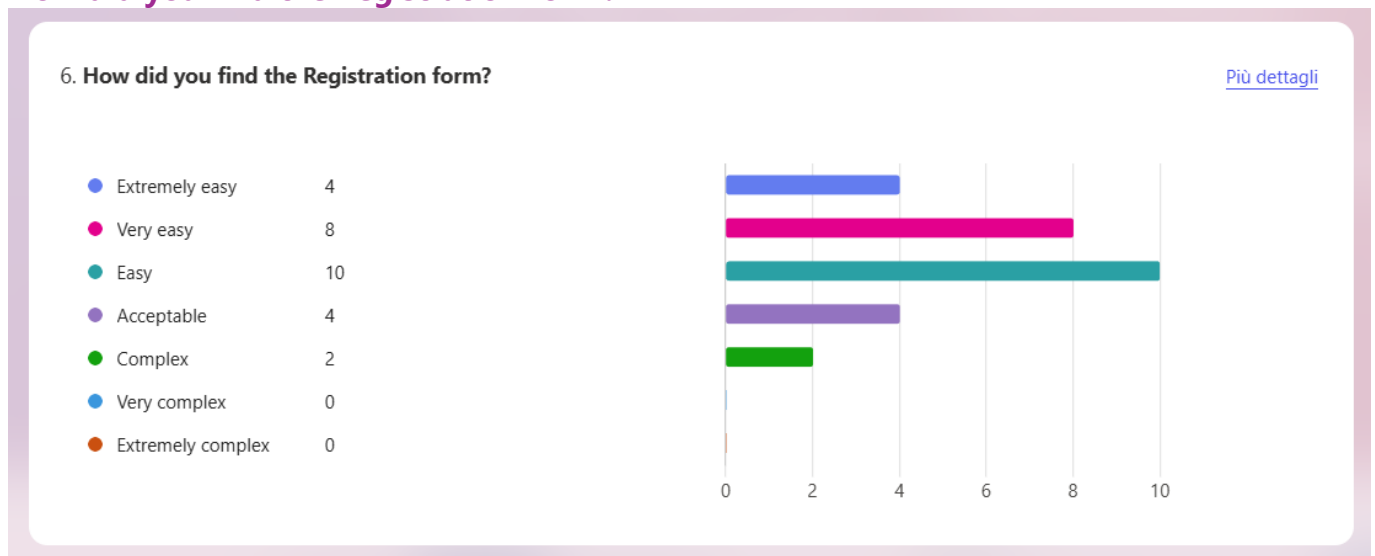


Figure 51 - Company Pre-Internship Survey (October 2025)

- A total of 28 respondents evaluated the **registration form**. **79% (22 out of 28)** found it "Easy," "Very easy," or "Extremely easy," showing that the form is overall well-designed and user-friendly.
- **4 respondents (14%)** rated it "**Extremely easy**"
- **8 respondents (29%)** rated it "**Very easy**"
- **10 respondents (36%)** rated it "**Easy**"
- 4 respondents (14%) considered it "Acceptable," suggesting that some minor improvements could still enhance clarity or usability.
- Only 2 respondents (7%) found it "Complex," while none rated it as "Very complex" or "Extremely complex."

Overall, feedback indicates that the **registration process was simple and intuitive**, with only a small minority encountering difficulties.

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

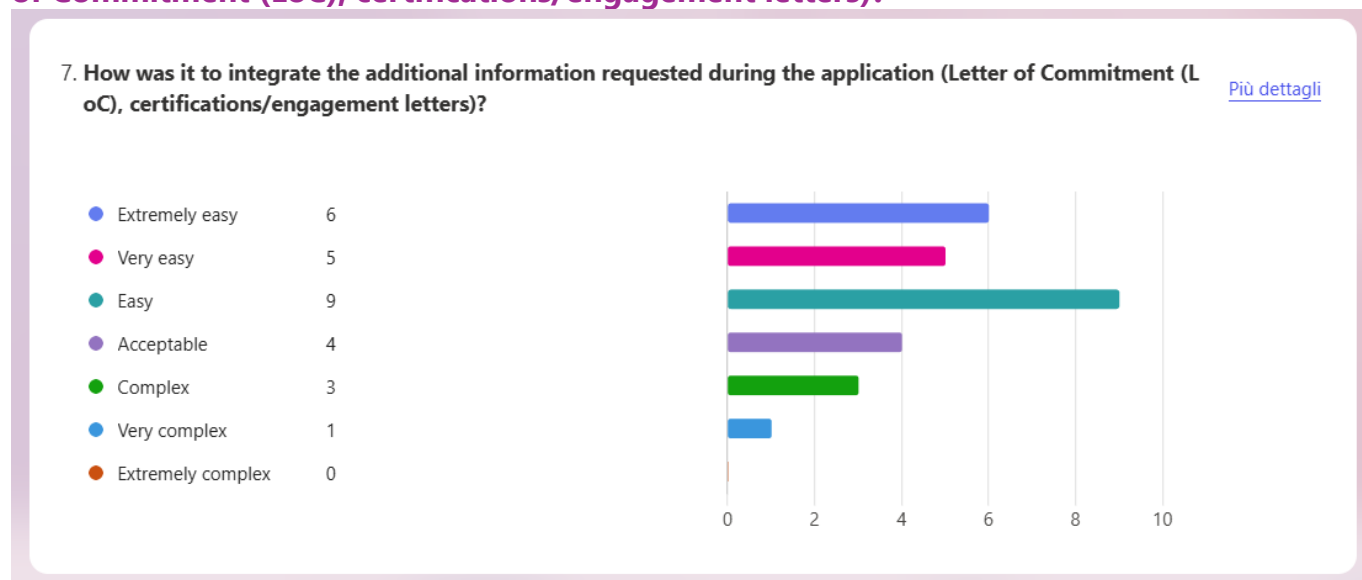


Figure 52 - Company Pre-Internship Survey (October 2025)

- A total of **28 respondents** evaluated the ease of integrating additional information during the application process (e.g. Letters of Commitment, certifications, engagement letters). **71% (20 out of 28)** found the process "Easy," "Very easy," or "Extremely easy," indicating that most users managed the task without major difficulties.
- **6 respondents (21%)** rated it "Extremely easy"
- **5 respondents (18%)** rated it "Very easy"
- **9 respondents (32%)** rated it "Easy"
- 4 respondents (14%) considered it "Acceptable," while 4 others (14%) experienced some level of difficulty — 3 "Complex" and 1 "Very complex."

Overall, the results show that while the majority found the document integration process straightforward, a small group still encountered **minor challenges**, likely related to the upload procedure or required document formats.



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

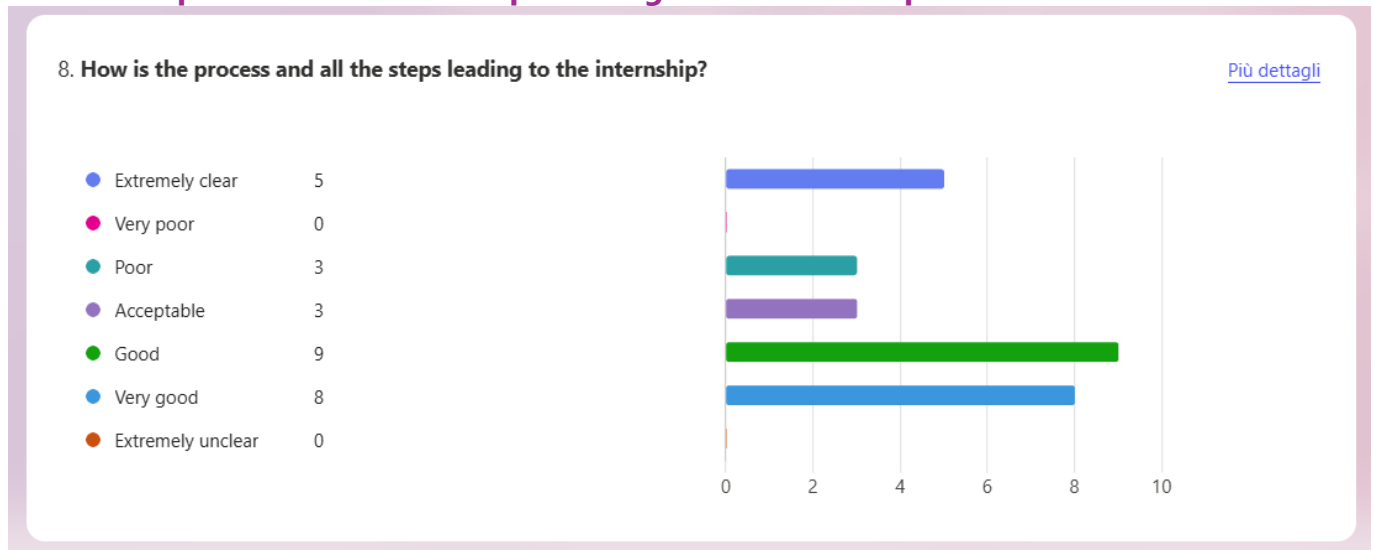


Figure 53 - Company Pre-Internship Survey (October 2025)

- A total of **28 respondents** evaluated the **process and steps leading to the internship**. **79% (22 out of 28)** rated the process as “Good,” “Very good,” or “Extremely clear,” showing a generally positive experience and satisfaction with how the internship procedure was structured and communicated.
- **5 respondents (18%)** rated it “**Extremely clear**”
- **8 respondents (29%)** rated it “**Very good**”
- **9 respondents (32%)** rated it “**Good**”
- **6 respondents (21%)** expressed a more neutral or critical view:
- **3 (11%)** rated it “**Acceptable**”
- **3 (11%)** rated it “**Poor**”

Overall, the data suggests that the **internship activation process was well-understood and clearly communicated**, with only a small minority finding it somewhat confusing or in need of clarification.



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

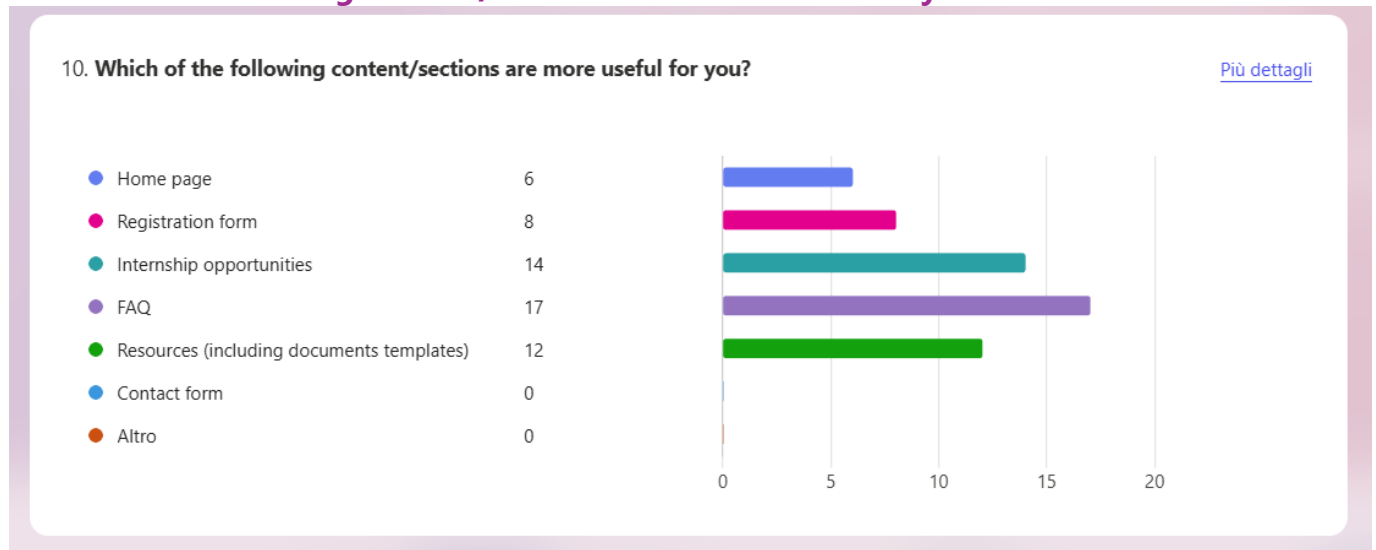


Figure 54 - Company Pre-Internship Survey (October 2025)

- A total of **28 respondents** indicated which sections of the platform they found most useful.
- The **FAQ section** ranked highest, selected by **17 respondents**, highlighting the importance of clear and accessible information to guide users through the process.
- Other frequently used sections included:
  - Internship opportunities: 14 respondents
  - Resources (including document templates): 12 respondents
  - Registration form: 8 respondents
  - Home page: 6 respondents

Overall, the results suggest that users primarily rely on **informative and functional content**—such as FAQs, internship listings, and downloadable resources—while less emphasis is placed on general or contact-related pages.



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

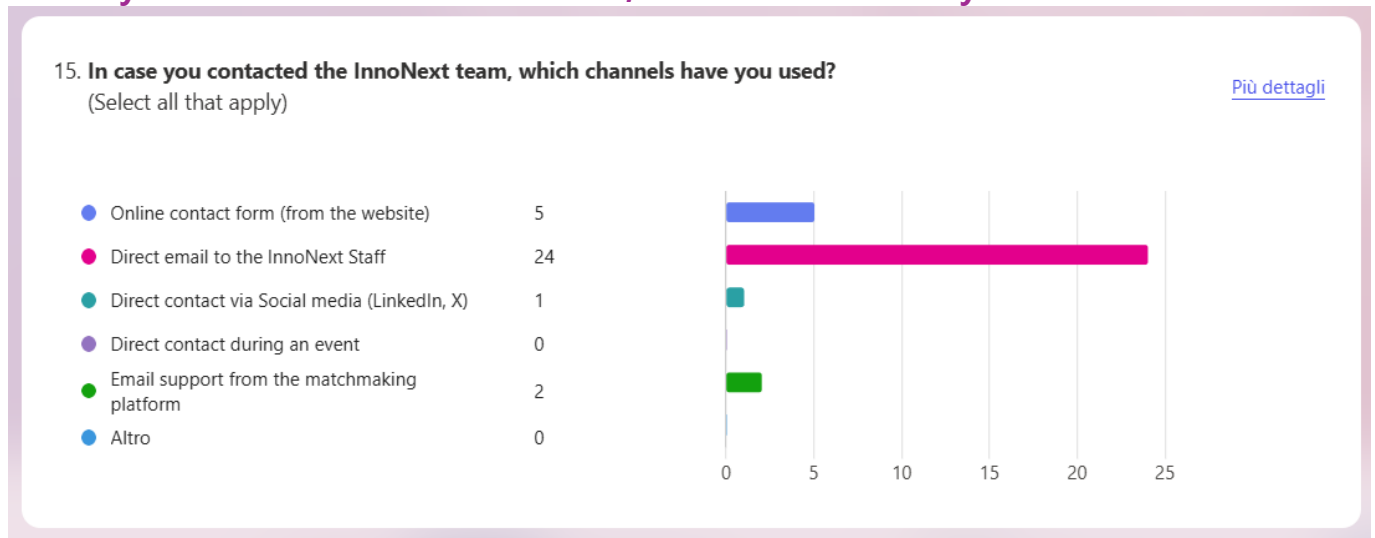


Figure 55 - Company Pre-Internship Survey (October 2025)

- **Direct email communication** clearly emerged as the preferred channel, chosen by **24 respondents**, showing that participants value a **direct and personal exchange** with the staff.
- Other channels were used to a lesser extent:
  - Online contact form (from the website): 5 respondents
  - Email support from the matchmaking platform: 2 respondents
  - Direct contact via social media (LinkedIn, X): 1 respondent
  - Direct contact during an event: 0 respondents
  - Other: 0 respondents

Overall, the data confirms that **email remains the dominant and most effective communication method**, while indirect or automated channels (forms, social media, platform messages) are used only occasionally.



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

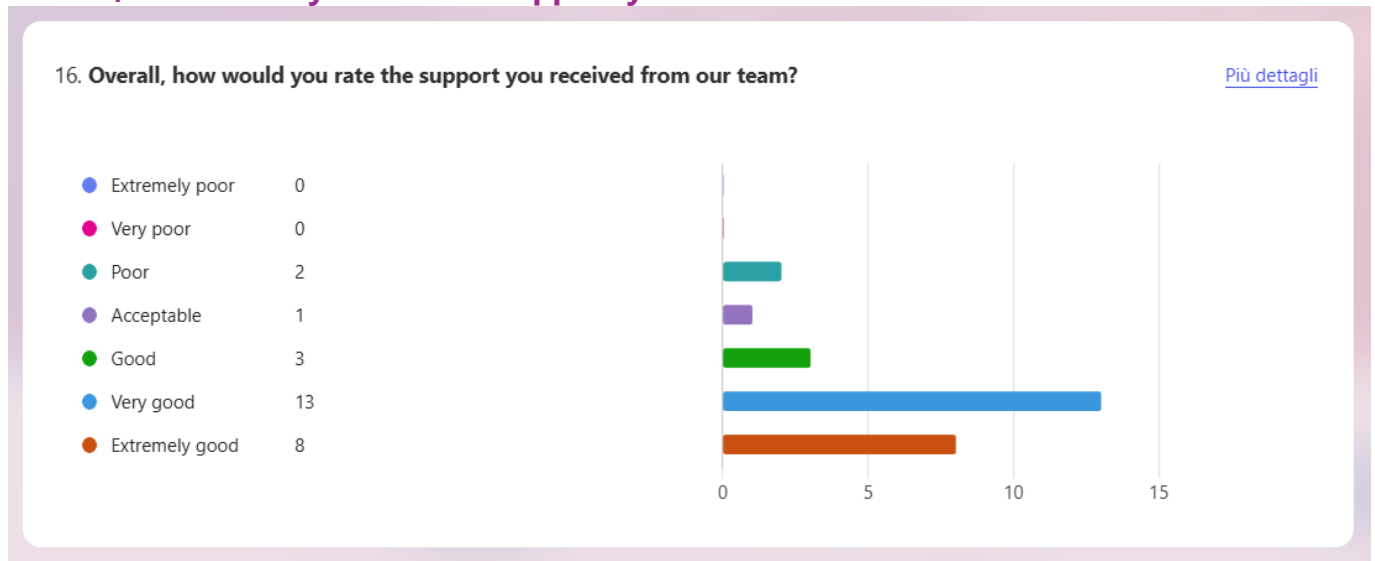


Figure 56 - Company Pre-Internship Survey (October 2025)

- A total of **27 respondents** rated the **overall support** they received from the InnoNext team.
  - **89% (24 out of 27)** gave positive feedback, rating the support as *“Good,” “Very good,” or “Extremely good.”* This confirms a high level of satisfaction with the responsiveness and professionalism of the team.
- **8 respondents (30%)** rated it **“Extremely good”**
- **13 respondents (48%)** rated it **“Very good”**
- **3 respondents (11%)** rated it **“Good”**
- 1 respondent (4%) rated it *“Acceptable”*
- 2 respondents (7%) rated it *“Poor”*

Overall, the data shows a **consistently strong appreciation** for the InnoNext team’s support, reflecting effective communication, availability, and guidance throughout the process.



## Which mentoring modality would you prefer participating in?

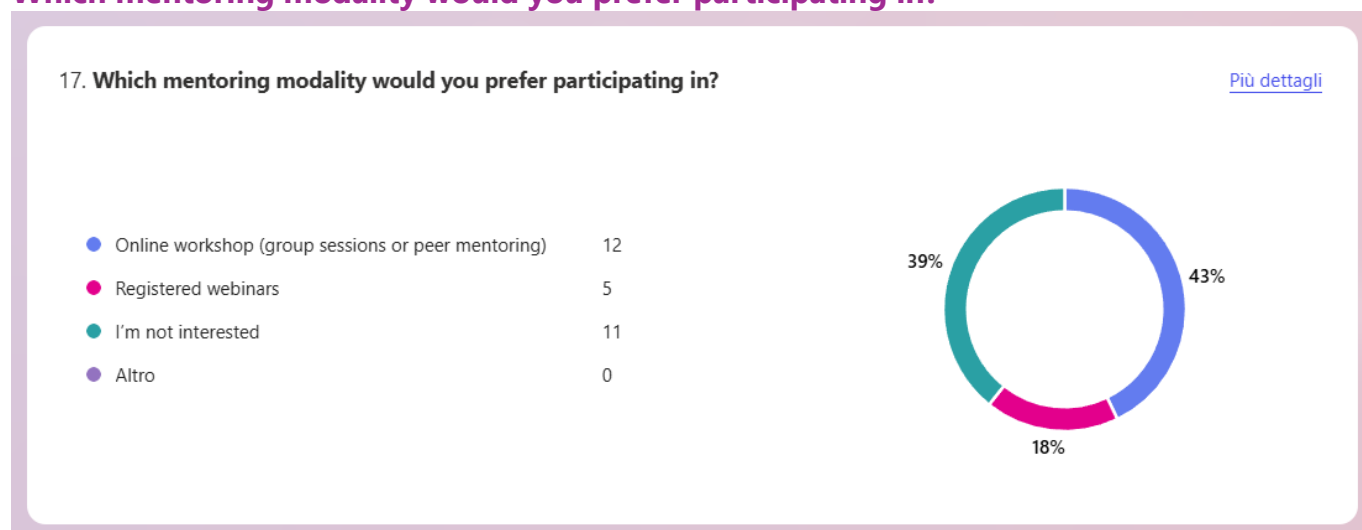


Figure 57 - Company Pre-Internship Survey (October 2025)

- **43% (12 respondents)** indicated a preference for **online workshops**, such as group sessions or peer mentoring, showing a strong interest in interactive and collaborative learning formats.
- **18% (5 respondents)** preferred **registered webinars**, suggesting a smaller group that values flexibility and self-paced participation.
- Meanwhile, **39% (11 respondents)** stated they are **not interested** in mentoring activities, indicating that a notable portion of participants may not currently see direct relevance or need for additional mentoring support.

Overall, the results highlight a preference for **live, participatory mentoring experiences**, though engagement strategies could be considered to increase interest among those currently less inclined to take part.



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[www.innonext-project.eu](http://www.innonext-project.eu) | [info@innonext-project.eu](mailto:info@innonext-project.eu)

InnoNext Consortium:

