MAPIT

MAPIT Mobilizing Advanced Partnership for Digital Innovation and Transformation

D3.3 Internationalization Reports

WP3: Roadmapping for Internationalisation

* Dissemination Level: PUBLIC

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Deliverable 3.3 (D3.3) collates the internationalisation efforts of the Research Performing Entities (RPEs) of the MAPIT project who were established with structural funding supplied by the European Union. “Internationalisation” in this context refers to their stronger and more sustainable integration with the European Research Area (ERA) in their respective domains of science and technology. Earlier in the first year of the project roadmaps are drafted firstly using backcasting with their stakeholders and then forecasting, in accordance with the Learning from the Future methodology that the consortium adopted. Following these roadmaps that were delivered in May 2025 (M9) and with the publication of the new Horizon Europe work programmes, these RPE committed the activities that are described in this deliverable.

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Purpose and Scope of the Report

Deliverable D3.3 of the MAPIT project documents the internationalization activities undertaken by the five Research Performing Entities (RPEs) during the first 12 months of the project. These entities were previously established using structural funds and are now taking strategic steps toward sustainable integration into the European Research Area (ERA) through participation in Horizon Europe and alignment with European research and innovation agendas.

The purpose of D3.3 is to report the progress of each RPE in implementing their Internationalization Roadmaps, which were previously developed and finalized in D3.2 through a participatory foresight methodology known as "Learning from the Future." These roadmaps laid out the AS-IS state (2025), TO-BE state (2030), and a progression of actions across three strands—technology use, productivity, and human resource development—guided by the “Journey Approach.”

D3.3 covers:

- **Roadmap Implementation**: A review of which actions, among those planned, were initiated or completed in the first project period (M1–M12), and which are scheduled for the next period (M13–M24).
- **Stakeholder Engagement and Clustering**: Mapping national and international stakeholder engagement efforts and progress in clustering with ERA-relevant actors and networks.
- **Support Activities**: The consultancy, coaching, and mentoring support provided under T3.4, as well as peer learning activities and MAPIT cluster events.
- **Call Participation**: Progress in targeting and responding to Horizon Europe calls, including proposal writing and submission status.
- **Synergies**: How synergies among RPEs and with ERA stakeholders are being leveraged to enhance competitiveness and build lasting collaborative frameworks.

The scope of the report is both retrospective and prospective. It serves as a mid-term reflection on how the RPEs are transitioning from structural fund beneficiaries into internationally competitive R&I actors, and as a platform for forward planning in Section 9.2, which identifies immediate next steps and actions due in the second implementation period.

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Key Highlights and Achievements

During the first 12 months, MAPIT RPEs made substantial progress in establishing building blocks of internationalization. They mapped and clustered stakeholders, launched key roadmap actions, and prepared for Horizon Calls in their own time frames. Peer learning activities and cluster events are planned with cross-RPE exchange, while preparations for Horizon Europe calls aligned their actions with ERA priorities. The development of synergies across thematic domains ensured that the project operates not as isolated efforts but as a collaborative platform for long-term ERA integration and sustainable growth.

Stakeholder Involvement and Clustering (Task T3.2: M6–M24)

- RPEs applied the project methodology to map and cluster stakeholders around shared desired futures.
- National and international actors were identified in smart specialization areas such as smart cities, additive manufacturing, robotics, and renewable energy.
- AI Domain Expert tool supported landscape analysis and partnership identification.
- Stakeholder conferences and roundtables established the foundation for ERA-aligned clusters.

Roadmap Implementation Actions (Task T3.3: M9–M24)

- Draft roadmaps for all five RPEs finalized, outlining AS-IS, TO-BE, and progressive actions across technology, productivity, and HR.
- Initial roadmap actions launched, including pilot services (FinEst), CRM-based partner mapping (IZTECH), SME digital transformation pilots (METU-BILTIR), and additive manufacturing demonstrators (ATAP).
- Preparations for second-period actions such as international memberships and proposal clustering are underway.

Consultancy and Coaching (Task T3.4: M9–M24)

- METU-BILTIR delivered structured consultancy to 80 SMEs with follow-up tailored transformation roadmaps for 8 of them.
- RPEs received coaching on proposal partnerships negotiation, ERA partnership building, and proposal design.
- Consultancy and mentoring sessions embedded knowledge transfer, strengthening RMA capacity.

Peer Learning Activities and Cluster Events (Task T5.2: M12–M24)

- Concepts of PLAs and cluster events operationalized: interactive knowledge-sharing and ERA-partnered clustering.
- Organized events included the Smart City Exchange Forum (Tallinn) and Globalization Journey seminar (Izmir).
- RPEs also joined external European events to showcase competences and engage new networks.

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Call Participation (Task T5.3: M12–M24)

- Targeted Horizon Europe calls in Missions, Partnerships, and Digital/Green transitions were identified.
- Early-stage proposal preparations initiated, with some RPEs (e.g. ATAP, METU) forming draft consortia.
- Capacity-building on proposal writing and ERA call analysis was embedded in consultancy and peer learning.

Building Synergies and Networks (Task T5.4: M1–M12)

- A synergy portfolio was developed to map thematic complementarities across MAPIT RPEs.
- Early joint activities (e.g., shared conference sessions, cross-RPE mentoring) demonstrated collaboration potential.
- RPEs aligned with European missions and partnerships (e.g., Made in Europe, NetZero Cities, Processes4Planet) to reinforce ERA positioning.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

Abbreviations/Acronyms and Description	
EDIH	European Digital Innovation Hubs
PLA	Peer Learning Activities
ERA	European Research Area
EU	European Union
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
LFC	Learning from the Future Conference
MaaS	Manufacturing-as-a-Service
R&D	Research and Development
R&I	Research and Innovation
RMA	Research Managers and Administrators
RPE	Research Performing Entity
SME	Small Medium Enterprise
ToC	Theory of Change
WIDERA	Widening Participation and Strengthening the European Research Area
WP(s)	Work Package(s)

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Strategic Rationale

The MAPIT project is a flagship initiative funded under the Horizon Europe Widening Participation and Strengthening the European Research Area (WIDERA) programme. It seeks to empower research-performing entities (RPEs) in widening countries to overcome locked-in effects and build resilient, internationally connected innovation ecosystems. By strategically strengthening their research and innovation (R&I) capacities, institutions aim to secure sustained participation in Horizon Europe and future European Framework Programmes.

1.2 Document Structure and Links to the Workplan

The structure of Deliverable D3.3 reflects a dual commitment to accountability and foresight. It is organized around evidence-based documentation of activities conducted during the first implementation period, while also guiding future steps in line with the internationalization roadmaps developed for each Research Performing Entity (RPE). Rather than simply reporting outcomes, the document applies a narrative approach that blends analytical reflection with operational insight. It contextualizes RPE actions within the broader framework of MAPIT's strategic methodology—the "Journey Approach"—which emphasizes stepwise, coordinated transformation. Each section builds upon outputs from previous deliverables (notably D3.1 and D3.2), incorporating data from participatory processes, stakeholder engagements, and institutional support mechanisms. In this way, D3.3 functions both as a monitoring instrument and a planning resource, ensuring that roadmap actions are not only traced but also aligned with the evolving Horizon Europe landscape and the goals of the European Research Area.

Table 1. Document Structure

Section	Title	Purpose
Stakeholder Involvement and Clustering	Task 3.2	Details efforts to engage and group relevant national and international actors.
Roadmap Implementation Actions	Task 3.3	Tracks actions initiated or completed according to each RPE's roadmap.
Consultancy and Coaching	Task 3.4	Reports expert support activities provided to RPEs for roadmap execution.
Peer Learning Activities and Cluster Events	Task 5.2	Describes horizontal learning sessions and events organized among RPEs.
Call Participation	Task 5.3	Documents steps taken toward Horizon Europe proposal submissions.

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Building Synergies and Networks	Task 5.4	Presents progress on collaborative alignment with ERA stakeholders.
Progress Monitoring, KPIs, and Immediate Next Steps	WP3 & WP5 Coordination	Reviews KPI-based achievements and outlines actions scheduled for M13–M24.

1.3 Methodology: 'Journey Approach' and Action Research

The Journey Approach, as illustrated in *Figure 1: Flowchart of methodological steps*, represents a phased and systemic progression designed to guide widening country research entities toward sustainable internationalization. It is a structured and future-oriented methodology grounded in participatory foresight as developed under the Action Research paradigm of Industrial Engineering. At its core, the approach begins with the articulation of a desired future state—typically the RPE's envisioned role within the European Research Area by 2030—and then applies backcasting to identify the key changes, milestones, and interventions required to reach that destination. This methodology deliberately liberates planning from the constraints of the present, allowing stakeholders to think beyond incremental improvements and instead focus on transformative shifts. It integrates three interdependent strands—technology use, productivity enhancement, and human resource development—into a coordinated roadmap that supports institutional evolution.

The roadmap development is a part of as a series of interconnected steps, each supported by strategic inputs and resulting in cumulative transformation outcomes. The "journey" starts with an assessment of *maturity levels in R&I capacity and digital transformation*, feeding into the *target setting of a desired future state* within a selected innovation domain. This future vision is shaped by using tools like competitive advantage analysis and supported by the AI Domain Expert, which helps uncover the landscape of existing R&I partnerships. The *Learning from the Future Conference* then anchors this visioning exercise, enabling RPEs to simulate future contexts and identify critical interventions in the present.

From there, the journey progresses through a co-creative process: training needs are defined in alignment with the Future Studies Programme, and RPEs clarify their *position in the value chain* while actively involving stakeholders. This results in the formulation of an *Internationalization Roadmap*—a living document that directs capacity development actions and identifies areas where consultancy, mentoring, and study visits can build readiness. The roadmap is implemented in tandem with talent development through short-term secondments, peer learning, and coaching, all feeding into the ultimate goal: *established trust in R&I collaborations*.

The final stages shift toward tactical execution. RPEs are supported in *discovering funding opportunities*, *developing project concepts*, and receiving *proposal writing support*. These culminate in active *call participation*, leading to visible engagement in EU-funded research. The endpoint of the journey is the ability to consistently *showcase capabilities and access funding*—a tangible signal that the RPE has crossed the

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threshold from regional participant to ERA-aligned actor. This methodical, feedback-driven structure ensures that the MAPIT project's strategic aims—building lasting capacities, deepening partnerships, and securing ERA footholds—are achieved through a coherent and actionable pathway.

The Journey Approach is particularly well-suited to the MAPIT project's objectives, as it not only structures internationalization as a phased transition but also aligns it with Horizon Europe ambitions and ERA integration. It provides a dynamic planning framework that reflects the complexity of each RPE's context while ensuring coherence across the consortium.

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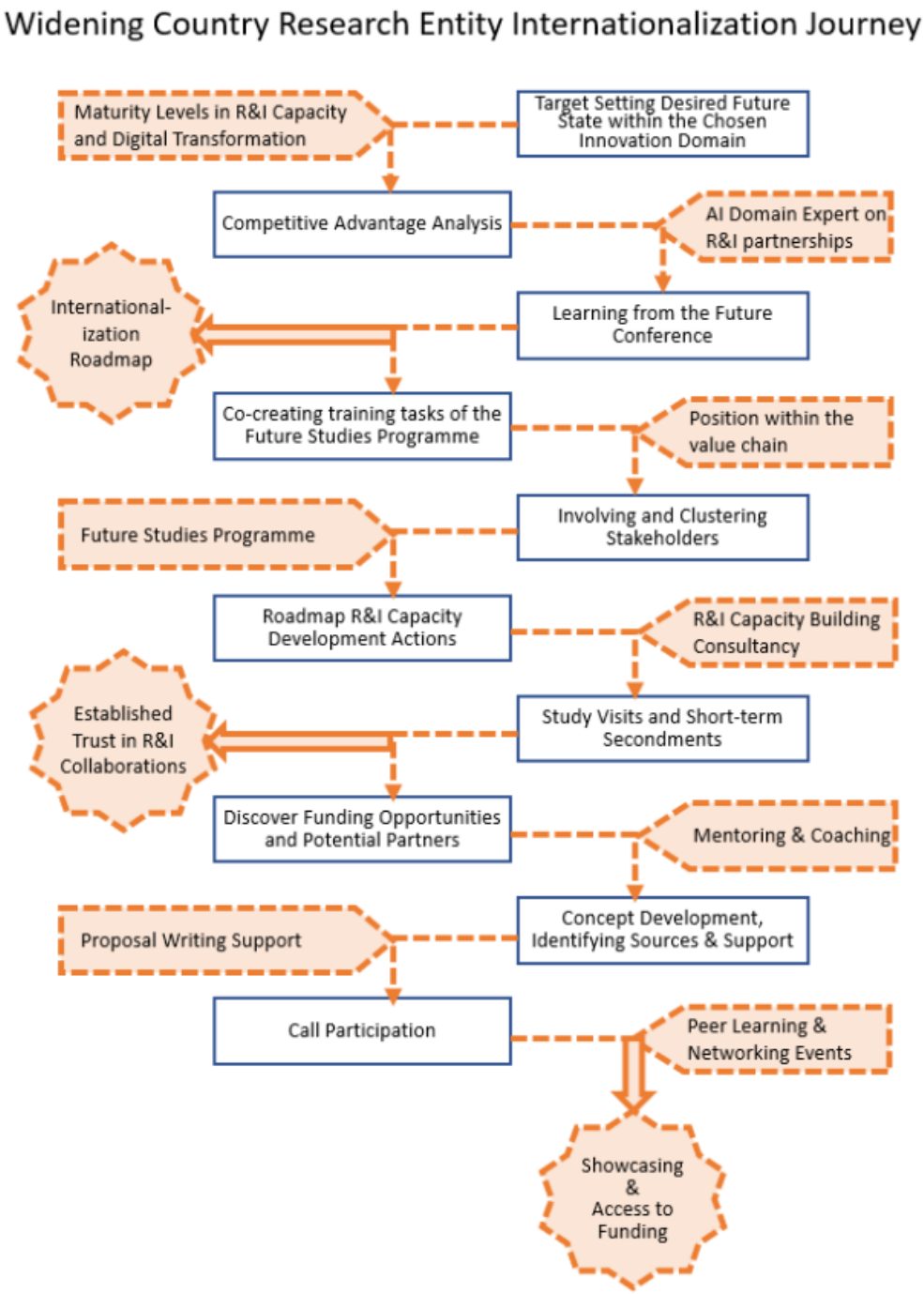

Figure 1. Flowchart of methodological steps

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1.3 MAPIT Research Performing Entities

The **Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance** (IPA II) is a key EU funding mechanism used to support reforms and structural development in countries aspiring to join the European Union. Within the context of the MAPIT project, IPA II structural funding was specifically employed to establish four advanced research-performing entities (RPEs) in Turkey: METU-BILTIR, IZTECH-NIC, ATAP-EDIC, and KTO-STEDEC. Each of these centers was founded under the EU's IPA II Competitive Sectors Programme, implemented through the Competitiveness and Innovation Sector Operational Programme (CISOP) of Türkiye. The common sector of these RPEs for competitiveness is advanced manufacturing. The funding enabled the creation of new high-tech R&I facilities, including prototyping centers, digital innovation hubs, and testing laboratories that serve SMEs and startups in their respective regions. Alongside infrastructure, IPA II funds were used to support training, international secondments, and study visits, all aimed at creating a future-ready, internationally networked R&I workforce.

The MAPIT project builds "upstream synergies" by connecting these IPA II-funded centers with Horizon Europe, allowing them to evolve from national support systems into internationally networked R&I actors.

The Estonian RPE in the MAPIT project is the **FinEst Centre for Smart Cities**, established within **Tallinn University of Technology (TalTech)**. Unlike the Turkish RPEs funded through IPA II, the FinEst Centre was created using structural funds from a different EU mechanism: the **Teaming for Excellence (TfE)** instrument under **Horizon 2020**, with additional co-funding from **European Regional Development Funds (ERDF)**. The FinEst Centre was initiated under the **FinEst Twins** project, a **Teaming for Excellence initiative** launched in 2019. The lead RPE was **Aalto University (Finland)**, with **TalTech (Estonia)** as the lower-capacity partner. The partnership included government-level participants to ensure alignment with **ERDF investments**. The Centre currently operates with funding and objectives shaped by the FinEst Twins project. As the **FinEst Twins funding will conclude by 2028**, the MAPIT roadmap guides the Centre's **transition to a self-sustaining institutional model**, integrating tighter into the **European Research Area (ERA)** through strategic internationalization, stakeholder alignment, and business model innovation

As of 2025, all MAPIT RPEs operate as newly established or recently restructured innovation centers with strong thematic capacities but either with limited international integration (the Turkish RPEs) or without a sustainable internationalization framework (the FinEst Centre). While they possess advanced infrastructure and regional influence, their Horizon Europe participation is minimal or nascent, and international partnerships are fragmented or informal. These RPEs face challenges such as low proposal success rates, limited visibility in European networks, and underdeveloped institutional mechanisms for sustained engagement with the ERA.

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Table 2. MAPIT RPEs

RPE	Brief Status
Anadolu Technology & Research Park (ATAP) – Eskişehir Design and Innovation Centre (EDIC)	ATAP, through its EDIC center, supports **advanced manufacturing**, especially for sectors like **aviation, rail systems, and white goods**. Despite housing over 150 R&D firms, ATAP remains largely **domestic in scope**, with weak international project involvement and no significant presence in Horizon Europe consortia
Izmir Institute of Technology (IZTECH) – Network and Innovation Centre (NIC)	IZTECH focuses on **renewable energy, AI, and robotics**, hosting major research centers and Teknopark İzmir with over 200 R&D firms. While it has scientific excellence and a strategic role in the regional green transition, its **Horizon Europe success rates are middling**, and its international partnerships are largely opportunistic rather than strategic
Middle East Technical University (METU) – Computer Aided Design, Manufacturing, and Robotics Research and Application Center (BILTIR)	BILTIR specializes in **Manufacturing-as-a-Service (MaaS)** with expertise in **automotive testing, AI, AR/VR**, and **digital twin systems**. Although it has robust national infrastructure and digital capabilities, its **international collaborations are nascent**, with only sporadic Horizon Europe involvement and underutilized global networks
Konya Chamber of Trade Karatay University (KTO) - Smart Technologies Design, Development and Prototyping Centre (STEDEC)	STEDEC operates as a high-tech R&I and prototyping hub focused on **precision agriculture** and **smart agricultural machinery**, leveraging facilities like an anechoic chamber and prototyping labs. While it plays a growing role in regional innovation, its **international engagement is minimal**, with very limited participation in Horizon Europe and fragmented links to European networks
Tallinn University of Technology – FinEst Centre for Smart Cities	The FinEst Centre is a mission-driven applied research unit focusing on **smart cities, digital infrastructure, and urban sustainability**. Established through the **Teaming for Excellence** instrument, it has participated in several EU-funded pilots, but still faces **gaps in long-term internationalization structures** and lacks a sustainable strategy for integration into the broader ERA post-2028

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2. Stakeholder Involvement and Clustering (Task T3.2: M6–M24)

This section provides overview of the clustering methodology described in the MAPIT workplan which synthesizes the separate visions of stakeholders into a shared "desired future" related to their target sectors in digital transition, R&I status, and roles of Innovation Centres. This shared vision is developed through participatory foresight—specifically the "Learning from the Future" approach. Clustering activities begin with stakeholder mapping and the definition of a desired future state, which is elaborated during dedicated conferences for each beneficiary. These conferences involve thematic roundtables on technology, productivity, and talent development, supported by an AI Domain Expert tool to explore the European R&I landscape and partnerships. This process enables the identification and alignment of stakeholders who share compatible visions, ultimately forming value-added clusters around concrete scenarios. The output of this methodology includes the formulation of internationalization roadmaps and the facilitation of purposeful dialogue, peer-learning, and joint participation in Horizon Europe calls

2.1 Clustering Methodology Overview

The structured approach to clustering illustrated in the schema in Figure 2 below follows a cyclical and iterative engagement pathway centered around targeted stakeholder involvement. It begins by involving easily accessible groups and devising tailored strategies to engage gateway actors—those with influence or access to broader networks—leveraging insights and responses processed through the AI Domain Expert regarding their involvement in Horizon Europe. These efforts are enriched by knowledge about targeted groups, contributing to the creation of Contact Records and subsequently Cluster Records. The methodology emphasizes communicating the "Desired Future" and value proposition while involving intermediaries to broaden outreach. Structured responses from these intermediaries help increase the visibility of targeted groups and enable their categorization. Feedback loops through networking events and result presentations further refine clustering strategies. Throughout the process, the instruction-following LLM is continuously fine-tuned to improve contextual understanding, ensuring an adaptive and intelligent clustering process that supports strategic collaboration and internationalization goals.

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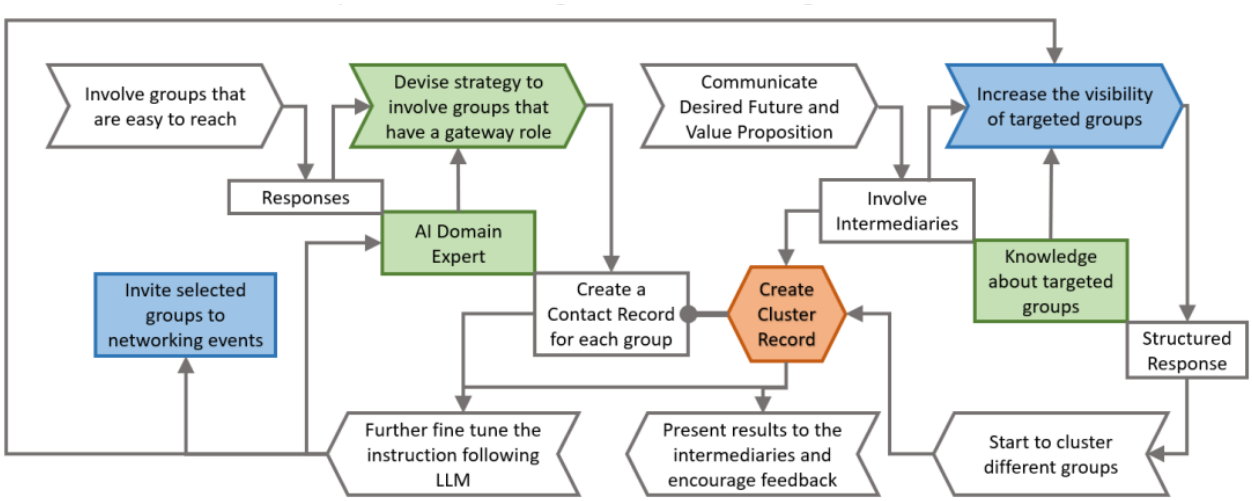

Figure 2. Feedback Loop for Involving and Clustering Stakeholders

2.2 National & International Stakeholders Engaged

This subsection documents the concrete stakeholders engaged, including municipalities, SMEs, research networks, and European platforms. It demonstrates the breadth of relationships built in the first project year.

Table 3. National & International Stakeholders Engaged

Stakeholder Name	Sector	Contacting RPE	Status
Directorate of EU Affairs & The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK)	R&I Management and Funding	**ATAP**	ATAP host Directorate of EU Affairs-Director General for Financial Cooperation and Project Implementation Mr. Bülent Özcan and TÜBİTAK Horizon Europe Director of the Operations, Coordination Unit Mr. Çağrı Yıldırım at the 2nd Technology Development Summit as a key not speaker regarding EU and Horizon Europe studies, calls, fundings and future programs on 5th of December 2024.
The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK)	R&I Management and Funding	**ATAP**	ATAP host TÜBİTAK NCPs Tarık Şahin and Erencan Bal at the Horizon Europe Info Day for the Horizon Europe funding and support systems, WIDERA programs on 15th January 2025
European Association of Research Managers	R&I Management and Administration	**ALL RPEs**	Planned as a part of WP4

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and Administrators (EARMA)			
European Federation for Welding, Joining and Cutting (EWF)	Industrial Associations	**ATAP**	No Action Yet
European Digital Innovation Hubs Network (EDIH)	R&I Management and Funding	**BILTIR, ATAP**	METU BİLTİR Center has received "Seal of Excellence" from EDIH within Digital Europe Programme. BILTIR made an application to become EDIH member in August 2025 with ATAP participation as a partner.
European Digital Innovation Hubs Network (EDIH)	R&I Management and Funding	**ATAP**	Sabanci University Nanotechnology Research and Application Center (SUNUM) made an application to become EDIH member in August 2025 with ATAP participation as a partner.
Made in Europe Partnership	Specialization Partnership	**ATAP, BILTIR**	No Action Yet
EIT Manufacturing	Higher Education Collaboration	**BILTIR**	BILTIR Center leverages its natural ties with ODTÜ Teknokent and the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) to foster industry-academia collaboration. Through this ecosystem, and with ODTÜ Teknokent's potential EIT Manufacturing membership, BİLTİR aims to strengthen its role in engaging national and international stakeholders.
Processes4Planet	Specialization Partnership	**BILTIR**	No Action Yet
European Factories of the Future Research Association (EFFRA)	Specialization Partnership	**STEDEC**	No Action Yet
European Digital Innovation Hubs Network (EDIH)	R&I Management and Funding	**STEDEC**	STEDEC made an application to become EDIH member and got Seal of Excellence.
European Innovation Partnership on Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability (EIP-AGRI)	Specialization Partnership	**STEDEC**	STEDEC aims to become a **regional knowledge hub for climate-resilient precision agriculture**. In this context, it plans to implement the **ModernAKIS framework**, promoted by the **EIP-AGRI**
Regional Innovation Valleys (RIVs)	Regional Innovation	**IZTECH**	IZTECH participates in RIVs to align with regional development strategies and green/digital transitions.
EIT Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs)	Innovation & Entrepreneurship	**IZTECH**	IZTECH collaborates with EIT KICs (Climate, Digital, Manufacturing) for research commercialization and education initiatives.

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EU Mission: Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities (NetZero Cities)	EU Mission Community	**FINEST**	Finest Centre to provide expert support and coaching for cities and (2) to foster rapid replication and scale-up of good practices and technologies. Specifically, the FinEst Centre for Smart Cities is involved in developing and implementing a tailored Learning Programme for Twinning (a peer learning and exchange programme between Pilot and Twin Cities) and identifying best practices to inspire and inform replication and scale-up in cities.
European Energy Research Alliance (EERA)	Energy Research	**IZTECH**	IZTECH engaged with EERA in joint workshops and thematic research in sustainable energy.
Open & Agile Smart Cities (OASC)	Community	**FINEST**	Plans of organising events together
European Regions R&I Network (ERRIN)	Smart Cities and urban mobility	FINEST	Joining ERRIN (working groups of Smart Cities and Urban mobility) under preparation for the Second Period

2.3 Second Period Stakeholder Engagement Plans

Forward-looking engagement strategies are detailed here, describing how RPEs will expand networks, consolidate partnerships, and participate in ERA-aligned clusters in the next project phase. Second Period (September 2025 – August 2026) engagement plans are summarized below:

ATAP-EDIC: ATAP is planning to

1. Organize a “Cluster Event” with ATAP’s national and international stakeholders in person.
2. Organize a “Cluster Event” with ATAP’s national and international stakeholders online.
3. Be a member of CROWDHELIX (last quarter of 2025)

IZTECH-NIC: During the second period, IZTECH and Teknopark İzmir will pursue a proactive stakeholder engagement strategy focused on strengthening existing collaborations and establishing new strategic partnerships at both national and international levels. The engagement efforts will be aligned with MAPIT’s objectives of enhancing institutional capacities, supporting innovation ecosystems, and fostering cross-border cooperation.

Planned actions include:

- Expanding international research networks by actively engaging with partners from the European Research Area, particularly targeting institutions in Greece and other widening countries, to develop joint proposals for Horizon Europe calls and regional innovation initiatives.

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- Deepening collaboration with regional stakeholders such as İzmir Development Agency (İZKA), local chambers of commerce, and industry clusters to co-develop innovation projects in areas like green transition, digital transformation, and advanced manufacturing.
- Operationalizing the Stakeholder CRM System to systematically track interactions, monitor engagement outcomes, and identify opportunities for joint activities with high-priority partners.
- Organizing thematic workshops and matchmaking events hosted at Teknopark İzmir to connect startups, SMEs, and academic researchers with international investors, corporate partners, and R&I actors.
- Formalizing cooperation agreements (MoUs, framework partnerships) with selected national and European institutions to secure long-term collaboration channels and facilitate talent mobility.
- Participating in targeted international conferences and fairs to promote IZTECH and Teknopark İzmir as innovation and entrepreneurship hubs, with a focus on attracting foreign investment and R&D collaborations.

Through these efforts, IZTECH and Teknopark İzmir aim to position themselves as key actors in regional and European innovation ecosystems, driving forward joint research, commercialization, and capacity-building initiatives.

METU-BILTIR: In the second period (September 2025 – August 2026), BİLTİR Center plans to strengthen stakeholder engagement by applying to the Horizon Digital Simple call (September 2025) for EDIH funding, while also expanding collaborations with European partners in new Horizon calls. Building on the MAPIT AI tool, developed together with its partners (IZTECH, Hogeschool Utrecht, WEGlobal, HETFA, KTO Karatay University, METU, ATAP, Tallinn University of Technology, and the Institute for Future Research), the Center aims to leverage upcoming funds to scale its use and commercialization. Furthermore, EDIH membership will be strategically linked with EIT Manufacturing opportunities, complemented by active cooperation with TÜBİTAK/ULAKBİM and joint project developments with ATAP, METU, and Anadolu University.

During this period, engagement activities will also emphasize deepening international collaboration, accelerate digital transformation initiatives, and enhancing institutional visibility through targeted dissemination and outreach. Monitoring progress against 2025 milestones and ensuring alignment with Horizon Europe priorities will serve as the foundation for positioning BİLTİR Center as a strong regional and European innovation actor by 2028.

KTO-STEDEC: KTO-STEDEC aims to expand its stakeholder network through both national and international channels in the second implementation period. A key objective is to become an active member of the Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System (AKIS) network in Türkiye, and to establish cooperation mechanisms with AKIS-related institutions across the EU.

TalTech - FinEst: FinEst Centre for Smart Cities will broaden and systematize its stakeholder engagement to consolidate its transition from a project-driven research hub to a sustainable ERA actor. FinEst will focus on deepening links with European mission platforms such as NetZero Cities and the EU Mission for 100 Climate-

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Neutral and Smart Cities, as well as strengthening ties with regional municipalities and under-resourced cities that can benefit from scalable urban innovation solutions. Engagement will move beyond pilot collaborations toward the co-design of replicable service models, enabling stakeholders to shift from one-off projects to long-term strategic alliances.

The Centre also plans to activate partnerships (such as European Regions R&I Network - ERRIN) with industry and civic actors around urban data governance, digital twins, and climate adaptation, aligning with Horizon Europe missions. At the same time, stakeholder engagement will be tied to capacity-building activities, including new talent pipelines and joint training initiatives with MAPIT peers, ensuring that engagement is anchored in institutional growth. Importantly, FinEst will formalize stakeholder clustering mechanisms that link municipalities, SMEs, and research partners into thematic consortia, creating a platform for European project development. These steps—complemented by MAPIT synergies—will allow FinEst to position itself as a transformation enabler for urban innovation across wider Europe.

MAPIT RPEs approach stakeholder engagement as a **progressive, mission-oriented process that clusters regional, national, and European actors into long-term consortia, transforming one-off collaborations into structured partnerships that build ERA integration, strengthen Horizon Europe participation, and anchor institutional growth**

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3. Roadmap Implementation Actions (Task T3.3: M9–M24)

D3.2 Internationalization Roadmaps lay out strategic, future-oriented action plans for each of the participating RPEs for each year until 2030. Each roadmap is a **tailored plan** that defines the specific steps the RPEs must undertake across three key dimensions—**Technology**, **Productivity**, and **Human Resources**—to overcome "locked-in effects" and build sustainable, internationally competitive research and innovation capacities.

3.1 Overview of Roadmap Commitments

Commitments across technology, productivity, and HR strands as agreed in the roadmaps are summarized in this section. It provides a benchmark for tracking implementation. Roadmap themes per RPE are,

STEDEC: Transitioning into a knowledge broker in climate-smart precision agriculture through the development of a Farm Lab, international certification, and mentorship programmes.

ATAP: Establishing a Hybrid Innovation Centre, implementing a digital factory model, and launching an Industry 4.0 resource sharing platform.

BILTIR: Becoming a MaaS R&I hub, leveraging AI/AR/VR and circular manufacturing systems.

IZTECH: Evolving into a "University 4.0" institution with AI-powered CRM systems and regional innovation valley leadership.

FinEst: Shifting from a project-based model to a mission-oriented platform actor with integrated urban solutions and a sustainable business model beyond its current Teaming project.

Smart Specialisation Domains: Each RPE identifies and commits to strategic thematic areas aligned with their regional strengths and ERA priorities, such as:

- Precision agriculture (STEDEC)
- Smart manufacturing (ATAP)
- Manufacturing as a Service (BILTIR)
- Renewable energy and AI (IZTECH)
- Urban transformation and smart cities (FinEst)

3.2 Roadmap Actions Initiated in the First Period

Details of the initial actions taken by each RPE during M1–M12, showcasing early progress in internationalization are given in the table below:

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Table 4. 2025 Roadmap Actions (T: Technology, P: Productivity, HR: Human Resources)

RPE	2025 Actions	Progress	Expected Outcome
ATAP, IZTECH	T1 Unified Communications with AI Support	**Participated in joint design of AI-supported communication channels across MAPIT entities.**	Deployment of intelligent communication platforms for internal use.
ATAP	P1 Map and Streamline Internal Workflows	**Started**	Schemes and Reports will be ready in October and will take approval from the Board.
ATAP, IZTECH, BILTIR, STEDEC, FINEST	HR1 RMA Training and Certification	**Joint needs analysis conducted across RPEs; initial training modules identified. IZTECH has piloted internal RMA awareness sessions and mapped relevant EU certification schemes.**	Establishment of a certified and sustainable RMA training programme across RPEs, leading to increased professionalization and EU project readiness. Candidates continue to their online training that HETFA offered, and they will finish by the end of August.
ATAP	HR2 Establish Innovation Capacity Development Centre	**Started**	Interviews with possible researchers have started.
IZTECH	P1 Stakeholder Management Process	**Developed a stakeholder engagement model based on regional S3 and Horizon priorities. Conducted mapping sessions with key regional actors.**	Systematic and transparent stakeholder engagement process established for research and innovation activities.
IZTECH	HR2 Study Visits and Secondments	**Planned study visit program in coordination with EU partners for late 2025; internal needs assessment completed.**	Strengthened international collaboration and capacity building for research and innovation staff.
BILTIR	T1 Implement Private Cloud Infrastructure	**Vendor discussions ongoing**	BILTIR will set up ERP/CRM system and private cloud pilot. This will constitute the digital backbone to support SME services and prepare for EDIH membership
BILTIR	P1 Initiate On-Demand Manufacturing for Testing Service	**Pilots for project-based team model in selected units in progress**	BILTIR will achieve more agile operations, aligned with international project standards
STEDEC	T1 Farm Lab Feasibility Study	**Initiated**	STEDEC initiated the study, in conjunction with their efforts to prepare for the Controlled Agricultural Environment (CAE) call
FinEst	P1: Define and internalize FC's Strategic Identity, Mission and Vision	**Initiated**	Ongoing process

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3.3 Roadmap Actions due in Second Period

The below table lists and describes the actions planned for M13–M24, ensuring clarity on the next milestones and expected outcomes:

Table 4. 2025 Last Quarter and 2026 Roadmap Actions (T: Technology, P: Productivity, HR: Human Resources)

RPE	4Q2025-2026 Actions	Planned Progress	Expected Outcome
ATAP	**T2**: Deploy Sensor-Based Data Infrastructure	**4th quarter 2025**	Waiting for WP2
ATAP	**P2**: Develop Roadmap for Industry 4.0 Resource Sharing Platform	**1st quarter 2026**	Need coaching
ATAP	**HR3**: Conduct Study Visits to Leading R&I Hubs	**2nd quarter 2026**	Planning
ATAP	**HR4**: Establish Talent Mobility Desk	**4th quarter 2025**	Ongoing
IZTECH	**T2**: Launch Place-Based Transformation Projects	**Identification of thematic areas (blue economy, sustainable materials, smart mobility) aligned with İzmir regional innovation strategy; stakeholder co-creation workshops planned.**	Implementation of pilot actions demonstrating place-based innovation and regional engagement.
IZTECH	**P2**: Configure Stakeholder CRM System	**Selection of CRM software and integration planning with ongoing stakeholder mapping. Staff training and data migration roadmap to be prepared.**	A centralized and accessible CRM platform for systematic stakeholder tracking and engagement.
IZTECH	**HR3**: Initiate Mentorship and Peer Learning Programs	**Design of mentoring framework for R&I staff and early-career researchers; peer sessions to be piloted with MAPIT partners**	Strengthened internal capacity, enhanced collaboration culture, and improved knowledge transfer.
IZTECH	**HR4**: Build Regional Partnerships with Innovation Actors	**Ongoing dialogue with regional clusters, chambers, and development agency. Partnership agreements under negotiation with selected innovation actors.**	Formalized collaborations to support joint projects, co-innovation, and policy alignment at regional level.
BILTIR	**HR1**: Launch Horizon Project Expert Programme	**Recruitments for Open Grant & Support Office (core-staff) ongoing**	Dedicated support for EDIH, EIT Manufacturing, and Horizon applications
BILTIR	**P2**: Define Business Model for MaaS (Manufacturing-as-a-Service) Testing Services	**Platform concept prepared**	BILTIR will launch SME cooperation platform (ATAP & Technopark partners), aiming to

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			have greater SME engagement, linked with Horizon Digital Simple / EDIH call
BILTIR	**T2**: Pilot Interoperability of Digital Systems in Manufacturing	**Pilot servers for AI/HPC cluster installation are being tested**	Stronger AI infrastructure to scale the MAPIT AI tool and support commercialization
STEDEC	**T2**: Begin Sensor Technology Development for Precision Agriculture	**1st quarter 2026**	Needs coaching
STEDEC	**P2**: Launch STEDEC as Regional Knowledge Broker (digital presence, community-building)	**1st quarter 2026**	Needs coaching
STEDEC	**HR3**: Initiate Agricultural Expert Advocacy Programme	**1st quarter 2026**	Needs coaching
FINEST	**T2**: Define Pilot Infrastructure Requirements	**1st quarter 2026**	Needs coaching
FINEST	**P2**: Initiate Internal Coordination Tools and Resource Planning	**1st quarter 2026**	Needs coaching
FINEST	**HR2**: Identify Skills Gaps and Launch Staff Capability Mapping	**1st quarter 2026**	Needs coaching

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4. Consultancy and Coaching (Task T3.4: M9–M24)

This section presents the consultancy and coaching services delivered to strengthen RPEs and their ecosystems. It emphasizes knowledge transfer, professionalization of RMA roles, and SME support.

4.1. Key Assumptions and Preconditions

The table below lists the key assumptions and preconditions for the RPEs consultancy and coaching needs, explaining each and why it is important to the overall strategy.

Table 5. Key Assumptions and Why They Matter

Assumption / Precondition	Explanation	Why it Matters
Strong institutional support (university leadership backs flexibility)	Leadership allows the RPEs sufficient autonomy and adjusts bureaucratic procedures (e.g. fast-tracking procurements, hiring).	RPEs' internationalization roadmaps require agility. Without streamlined processes, initiatives like deploying new infrastructure could be delayed or derailed. Leadership commitment ensures the roadmap can be implemented on time.
Sustainable funding availability (diverse funding streams)	Adequate funding from national programs, EU grants, industry contracts, etc., is secured continuously through 2030.	Nearly every activity (from building a private cloud to running training programs) needs financial resources. Assuming funding flows as planned is crucial – otherwise key projects might stall. Lack of flexible funding was a known challenge; overcoming this via multiple sources is assumed.
Industry engagement and demand	Industry stakeholders are willing to collaborate on R&D and use the new offerings (testing services, digital solutions).	If companies do not participate or send projects, services (e.g. on-demand testing, digital passports) won't reach scale or prove their value. The roadmap assumes a receptive market for these services, which is vital for achieving impact on industry competitiveness.
Retention of skilled personnel (low brain-drain)	The RPEs can retain key experts and trained staff over the years and continues to attract new talent through its programs.	High turnover would undermine capacity – consistent teams are needed to carry activities through and build institutional memory. This assumption is critical given competition for AI and engineering talent; losing people to industry is a risk that must be mitigated for continuity.
Technology performs and integrates as expected	The new technologies (cloud platform, AI tools, data systems) can be implemented and scaled without major setbacks. Also assumes no critical technical incompatibilities.	The entire digital transformation rests on tech working as envisioned. For example, the private cloud must handle workloads, data spaces must interoperate with partners' systems. This assumption matters because any fundamental technical failure (e.g. security issues or performance shortfalls) could compromise outputs like the AI-supported services.
Policy and regulatory environment remain favorable	Government and EU policies continue to support digital manufacturing, and no regulatory barriers (e.g. data protection issues, export controls) impede BILTIR's collaborative work.	A supportive external environment is assumed – e.g., Horizon Europe continues to welcome Turkish entities, and digital trade regulations allow cross-border data collaboration. Should policies shift negatively (funding cuts, restrictive laws), RPE's ability to partner and innovate would be affected.

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Strong collaboration between RPEs and Teknoparks	Joint governance structures and shared resources are maintained to implement internationalization and innovation activities effectively.	The synergy between the university and its technopark is a cornerstone for engaging industry, attracting foreign partners, and delivering high-impact Horizon Europe projects. Weak collaboration would fragment efforts and reduce overall impact.
Active participation of Greek and other EU partners	Partnerships with targeted institutions in Greece and other ERA countries are successfully established and maintained.	Given the strategic focus on cross-border cooperation, especially with geographically close partners, this assumption is essential for consortium building and increasing project success rates in Horizon Europe calls.
Continuous development of stakeholder CRM and data systems	CRM systems for mapping, tracking, and engaging stakeholders are fully functional and continuously updated.	A robust CRM ensures targeted, data-driven engagement, helping prioritize high-value partners and measure impact over time. Without this, stakeholder engagement would be less strategic and harder to scale.
Regional policy alignment with EU Green and Digital transitions	Regional authorities (e.g., İzmir Development Agency) continue to prioritize themes aligned with EU missions and clusters.	Alignment ensures that regional actors, funding instruments, and innovation strategies support IZTECH's internationalization and Horizon Europe engagement, creating a coherent ecosystem.

*These assumptions underpin the Internationalization Roadmaps' logic and establish the basis for ensuing activities. The success of interventions towards organizational transformation **depends** on these conditions holding true.*

4.2. Consultancy Services Provided

The below list details the consultancy services offered, such as **Consortium Building** and **Proposal Design and Preparation Workflow**, and explains their role in supporting internationalization:

1. **METU BILTIR Center**

   METU-BILTIR Centre has provided extensive consultancy services to SMEs through a structured three-phase approach under the project framework. In Phase-1, preliminary digital transformation assessments and need analyses were conducted for 80 SMEs, involving comprehensive outreach, company engagement, and the preparation of structured evaluation reports. In Phase-2, detailed digital transformation assessments were carried out for a selected group of 8 SMEs, requiring in-depth interaction with company representatives, on-site evaluations, and the development of tailored recommendations. In Phase-3, preparations were made for the implementation of digital transformation solutions for a third group of SMEs, with a focus on selecting the most suitable candidates for pilot applications.

   During these activities, promotional presentations of the AI tool developed within the MAPIT Project were also delivered to SMEs, showcasing its potential benefits for digital transformation. Furthermore, consultancy sessions created opportunities to explore future collaboration under EU projects with several SMEs. For example, discussions were initiated with one of the SMEs engaged in advanced manufacturing and robotics to jointly prepare a proposal for a Horizon Europe call focused on AI-driven industrial automation.

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These consultancy activities not only provided SMEs with strategic roadmaps for digital transformation but also served as a hands-on training environment for METU-DTX personnel, ensuring knowledge transfer and capacity building.

2. WEglobal for all RPEs except FinEst: Consortium Building Coaching

Consultancy focused on developing the skills and strategies required for effective cross-cultural negotiation, partner identification, and long-term collaboration with European institutions, ensuring that RPEs and SMEs can successfully position themselves within ERA consortia.

3. WEglobal for all RPEs except FinEst: Proposal Design and Preparation Workflow Consultancy

Consultancy service guiding RPEs through the full lifecycle of Horizon Europe proposal development—from identifying suitable calls and aligning with mission priorities to structuring competitive applications and establishing robust preparation workflows.

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5. Peer Learning Activities and Cluster Events (Task T5.2: M12–M24)

5.1. PLA and Cluster Event Concepts

A **peer learning activity** in the context of the MAPIT project refers to an interactive and participatory event designed to transfer knowledge and experience either among the beneficiary RPEs or from more advanced European RPEs. These activities are related in the broader goals of internationalization and capacity building for integration into the ERA. They are **structured exchanges** where RPEs and stakeholders share insights, experiences, and lessons learned during their internationalization journeys. Peer learning activities are **designed to foster synergies** and **cross-institutional learning**, especially between RPEs in widening countries and established European research entities.

A **cluster event activity** in the context of the **MAPIT** project, refers to a coordinated engagement bringing together multiple stakeholders — including RPEs, local or ERA partners, and sectoral actors — to foster **value-added research and innovation (R&I) partnerships** towards a specific goal such as applying calls with a specific destination or establishing the branch of an international alliance.

Besides these two concepts, MAPIT partners do also take part or organize international events with other concepts that support their internationalization efforts.

5.2 Organized or Planned Activities and Events for Internationalization

The table below lists and describes the PLAs and events that are organized in relation to the MAPIT project or scheduled to foster collaboration and visibility:

Table 6. Organized Activities and Events

Event/Activitiy Title	Host	Participants	Topics Covered
Smart City Exchange Forum 13.3.2025, Tallinn, Estonia	FINEST	**200**	The event centered on the theme "Shaping Cities with Data, AI & Smart Governance
FINEST CENTRE's Story: From Idea Conception to Post-Project Ambitions and Vision 21.2.2025	FINEST	**80**	As part of The Widening Impacts Spring 2025 Webinar Series, initiated by the SolarHub Excellence Hubs project
Smart City Challenge 2025 participation 3.6.2025 (online)	FINEST	**170**	Introductory webinar for the pilot proposals of the Teaming project to solve the challenges. Teams need to have one Estonian but also one non-Estonian city involved as a pilot site. Non-Estonian teams are encouraged to make proposals.
Smart City Marketplace Webinar			How can innovation from companies and universities be an asset for your smart city transition?

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Bilateral Meetings for each partner of project SYNAPSE	ATAP	**METU DTX, BCCI , UNWE, GALATI, VYTAUTAS MAGNUS, TALTECH, V. N. KARAZIN KHARKIV NATIONAL UNIVERSITY, NETHERLANDS BUSINESS ACADEMIA, IASP, ACCIO, HOCHSCHULE DARMSTADT**	- Project Details - Possible contributions - Allocation of work packages
Horizon Europe and TÜBİTAK International Support Programmes Meeting (July 9, 2025)	Teknopark İzmir (Online)	**Entrepreneurs, R&D company managers, researchers**	Overview of Horizon Europe and TÜBİTAK international funding opportunities and participation strategies
Globalization Journey: Supports, Strategies and Experiences (April 30, 2025)	Teknopark İzmir	**Entrepreneurs, R&D company managers, researchers**	Strategies, support mechanisms, and experiences for entering global markets
Teknopark İzmir Meetup-9: AI Solutions and Autonomous Technologies (April 28, 2025)	Teknopark İzmir (Online)	**Tech startups, researchers, industry representatives**	Artificial intelligence solutions, autonomous systems, and international applications
International Trade and Growth Opportunities in the UAE Market Seminar (April 16, 2025)	Teknopark İzmir	**Entrepreneurs, SMEs, exporters**	Business opportunities, trade expansion strategies, and networking with UAE market actors
TÜBİTAK Funds for Entrepreneurs: National and International Supports (April 22, 2025)	Teknopark İzmir (Online)	**Entrepreneurs, R&D companies**	Funding mechanisms for entrepreneurs, including international collaboration opportunities
Software & Informatics Sector Supports with HİB and YASAD Introduction Meeting (May 20, 2025)	Teknopark İzmir (Online)	**Software companies, tech startups, exporters**	Export supports, sectoral networking, and collaboration opportunities
Agrotech 2025 Smart Agriculture Technologies Hackathon Competition	MEVKA, STEDEC, Kapsül Technology Platform, Social Innovation Agency, Ministry of Industry and Technology of the Republic of Türkiye		This initiative fosters collaboration in the agricultural sector by uniting entrepreneurs, generating innovative tech-driven solutions for regional challenges, and creating shared learning experiences through a hands-on approach.
European Union Project Proposal Writing Training	STEDEC		This training aimed to enhance understanding of how to benefit from EU funding mechanisms and how to develop strategic project proposals to foster international collaboration.

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Besides the above events of the first period, there are already planned events for the second period and some of them are listed in the table below:

Table 7. Planned Activities and Events

Event/Activitiy Title	Host	Participants	Topics Covered
SYNAPSE Cluster Event	ATAP	- **ANADOLU ÜNİVERSİTESİ TÜRKİYE WIDENING UNIVERSITY** - **ATAP A.Ş. TÜRKİYE WIDENING TECHNOPARK** - **METU DTX TÜRKİYE WIDENING INNOVATION CENTER** - **BCCI BULGARIA WIDENING ASSOCIATION** - **UNWE BULGARIA WIDENING UNIVERSITY** - **GALATI ROMAINE WIDENING UNIVERSITY** - **VYTAUTAS MAGNUS LITHUANIA WIDENING UNIVERSITY** - **TALTECH ESTONIA WIDENING UNIVERSITY** - **V. N. KARAZIN KHARKIV NATIONAL UNIVERSITY UKRAINE WIDENING UNIVERSITY** - **NETHERLANDS BUSINESS ACADEMIA NETHERLANDS EU UNIVERSITY**	- From Lab to Market: Strategies for Valorizing Research Results. - Reforming University R&I Ecosystems: Best Practices for Widening Countries. - Fostering Intersectoral Mobility: Creating Research Careers Beyond Academia. - AI and Digital Transformation in Research: Upskilling for University Excellence. - Building Strategic Alliances: Models for International University-Industry Collaboration. - Empowering Universities: Implementing ERA Policies for Institutional Autonomy.

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		- **IASP SPAIN EU ASSOCIATION** - **ACCIO SPAIN EU ASSOCIATION** - **HOCHSCHULE DARMSTADT GERMANY EU UNIVERSITY** **CDTI SPAIN EU ASSOCIATION**	
Study Visits and Incoming Delegations	IZTECH	- **European innovation hubs, universities, technology parks (Greece, Netherlands, Germany)**	- Knowledge exchange, best practice sharing, joint project development
Thematic Research Workshops	IZTECH & MAPIT partners	- **Researchers, industry experts, policymakers**	- Digital energy systems, wind energy O&M optimization, regional innovation ecosystem development
CL5 Cluster Event (Beginning of New Semester 2026)	IZTECH	- **Regional and European research institutions, industry clusters, policymakers**	- Energy, climate, and mobility research; consortium building for Horizon Europe Cluster 5 calls
Wind Energy Innovation & Collaboration Day (2026)	IZTECH	- **Wind turbine manufacturers, O&M service providers, universities, research institutes, policy makers**	- Reliability improvement, predictive maintenance, and optimized operations for wind energy systems; collaboration building for CL5 wind-related Horizon Europe calls

5.3 Participated Activities and Events for Internationalization

Table 8 below reports on external international events where RPEs took part, contributing to their networking and international presence:

Table 8. Participated Activities and Events

Event/Activity Title	RPE	Topics Covered
ICTurkey 2025 International Project Market, Brokerage Event in İstanbul	ATAP	This prestigious event, organized under the Horizon Europe framework, brought together researchers, industry leaders, public institutions, and NGOs from Turkey and Europe to explore innovation and cooperation opportunities in the field of information and communication technologies (ICT). ATAP A.Ş. hosted a dedicated institutional stand, which attracted significant interest from participants
CETPartnership Event- and Matchmaking platform (13/06/2025)	IZTECH	Information Event for Joint Call 2025: Call Modules 4 ,5 & 8: During the event there was short presentations about the three Call Modules and then plenty of time for questions from the audience.

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CETPartnership Event- and Matchmaking platform (28/05/2025)	IZTECH	Joint Call 2025 Launch Event: During the event, potential applicants received all relevant information during our Call Launch Event: call stages, structure and topics (call modules), transnational and national eligibility rules, and Q&A.
The Smart Specialisation Community of Practice (S3 CoP)- The Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3) Conference 2025 (18/06/2025)	IZTECH	Together with speakers from the European Commission, academia, managing authorities and S3 implementing bodies, the S3 Conference will be presented around four main pillars: • Latest developments on the policy concept and progress on S3 implementation • S3 Community of Practice: Overview of three years of activities • S3 and interregional collaboration: Opportunities and examples Outlook related to policy developments and the S3 Community of Practice
TÜBİTAK_ CETPartnership 2025 Joint Call and National Application Process Information Event (27/06/2025)	IZTECH	Within the scope of the event, information was given about the call modules in the CETPartnership 2025 Joint Call and the national and international application conditions.
TÜBİTAK and the Greek General Secretariat for Research and Innovation (GSRI) for R&D and Innovation projects in academia-industry collaboration Info Day (11/07/2025)	IZTECH	Within the scope of the call, it was explained that applications can be made in the fields of "Bioscience, Health and Pharmaceuticals", "Agriculture and Food", "Sustainable Energy", "Materials, Buildings and Industry", "Culture, Tourism and Creative Industry" and "Circular Economy".
TÜBİTAK_ Women TechEU 4 Call Info Webinar (31/07/2025)	IZTECH	An information webinar was organized to convey the details of the program and to enable entrepreneurs who received support in previous periods to share their experiences.
CETPartnership Event- and Matchmaking platform (13/06/2025)	IZTECH	Information Event for Joint Call 2025: Call Modules 4 ,5 & 8: During the event there was short presentations about the three Call Modules and then plenty of time for questions from the audience.
EDIH NETWORK SUMMIT	BILTIR	BILTIR participated in the EDIH Network Summit held in Brussels on 26-27 November 2024. The summit focused on AI, digital transformation, and innovative practices across various sectors, offering valuable knowledge sharing and collaboration opportunities.
Horizon Europe Brokerage Event for Cluster 6, Warsaw, Poland	STEDEC	20 direct bilateral meetings with potential project partners from across Europe, discussing ongoing and future collaborations. In particular, active discussions were held around AKİTEK's current initiatives under Cluster 6

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Care4Bio	STEDEC	The Event is a networking platform bringing together stakeholders to share project ideas and build partnerships for Horizon Europe Cluster 6 calls on food, agriculture, bioeconomy, and environment.
COSME Project Writing Training and Workshop	STEDEC	The COSME Project Writing Training provided participants with practical knowledge on EU project writing standards and effective proposal preparation, helping SMEs and entrepreneurs enhance their competitiveness and collaboration opportunities nationally and internationally.
TPEC 2025: Texas Power and Energy Conference	FINEST	AI-driven optimization and integration of smart urban energy systems, including microgrids and building-level energy intelligence.
GITEX Europe 21-23.5.2025, Berlin, Germany	FINEST	Scalable digital innovations for smart governance, citizen services, and urban tech entrepreneurship.
Cities mission 6.-8.5.2025 Vilna, Lithuania	FINEST	Implementation pathways for climate-neutral city pilots and cross-mission coordination strategies.
Cities Forum 17.-19.6.2025, Kraków	FINEST	Integrated urban planning, governance innovation, and digital twin applications for city transitions.
Data Spaces Symposium 2025	FINEST	Design and governance of urban data spaces to enable interoperable and secure public data ecosystems.
European Robotics forum 2025	FINEST	Deployment of robotics in urban maintenance, mobility, and infrastructure inspection.
Strategic Stakeholder Forum meeting of the Data Spaces Support Centre	FINEST	Public sector leadership in shaping and operationalizing cross-domain data spaces.
Hamburg digital twin conference	FINEST	"Breathing life into the digital concrete jungle – addressing the integration of biodiversity to urban digital twins"
Cleantech Capital Day	FINEST	Scaling and financing clean and circular urban technologies for climate-neutral city markets.
24th International Conference on Autonomous Agents and Multiagent Systems	FINEST	Multi-agent AI systems for simulation, coordination, and real-time decision-making in complex urban environments.
Latitude59	FINEST	Public-private co-creation models and start-up engagement for smart city innovations across the Baltic region.
e-Governance Conference	FINEST	From Bytes to Benefits: Raising prosperity through digital transformation
Utopian Hours	FINEST	Human-centered, cultural, and imaginative approaches to urban transformation.
26th Annual International	FINEST	Evidence-based policymaking and civic technologies for responsive urban governance.

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Conference on Digital Government Research		
eCAADe – Education and Research in Computer Aided Architectural Design in Europe	FINEST	Computational and AI-assisted design for resilient and sustainable urban development.
2025 Annual Symposium of the Digital Geographies Research Group of the Royal Geographical Society	FINEST	Spatial justice and critical perspectives on digital technologies shaping urban life.
5th ISA Forum of Sociology	FINEST	Social impacts of digital transformation in cities, including equity, participation, and community resilience.
Empowering PV Integrated Communities	FINEST	A Decentralized Framework For Sustainable & Resilient Low-Carbon Transition.
"The potential of digital vegetation"	FINEST	A keynote lecture in Aalto University promoting an international Smart City course

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6. Call Participation (Task T5.3: M12–M24)

Embedded within the project's broader strategy to enable RPEs in widening countries to systematically engage with the **Horizon Europe** programme and build **sustainable international R&I partnerships,** MAPIT partners will pay a mutual effort in participating a minimum number of three proposals per RPE during the project lifetime. There will be 2025 Autumn and 2026 Spring calls to target in the Horizon Europe work programme, as well as the Autumn 2026 deadlines which almost be within the project duration. With assumptions on the availability of sufficient resources, stable external conditions, and institutional support for proposal writing withholding, three participations whether as a coordinator or a partner will be feasible.

6.1 Process of Call Targeting and Proposal Preparation

Relying on their smart specialization areas and Roadmap priorities established by the Learning from the Future methodology, each RPE studies and selects target calls from the Horizon Europe 2025-2026 work programme which is announced in Spring 2025.

Next a Category A or B researcher for each target call who produced a concept note to share with the core partners and potential partners to join a consortium for the call. The exercise with the concept note also helps to craft a value proposition for the RPE when seeking other consortia who would apply for the call.

The process then continues with regular meetings with the coaching and consulting team to i) fine tune objectives, ii) design a skeleton of the workplan iii) assign roles for each partner.

The actual proposal writing follows these preparations and proceeds in collaboration. The final step is to complete the cost and effort tables of the provisional budget of the project in a balanced way.

For some partners the **AI Domain Expert tool**, a conversational AI trained on CORDIS projects datasets were instrumental in this process to position themselves and to seek partners with specific expertise.

6.2 2025 Horizon Europe Target Calls

The overview of the specific Horizon Europe calls targeted by the RPEs during the 2024 and 2025 Horizon Work Programmes are listed below:

Table 9. Present List of Targeted Calls

Call Title	Call ID	Participant RPE / Role	Concept

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European Excellence Initiative	HORIZON-WIDERA-2025-01-ACCESS-01	**ATAP, IZTECH, BILTIR, KTO, WEG**	**ATAP PROPOSAL: BRIDGE** More foreign venture capital from top innovation regions to help startups in emerging/moderate ecosystems grow and expand internationally. Greater visibility and access for foreign investors to discover and invest in startups from less connected innovation regions. Better understanding for foreign investors of local regulations and collaboration networks to support cross-border investment. Improved knowledge for startups from emerging/moderate regions about market expectations, regulations, and investor networks in advanced innovation regions. Increased local venture capital availability in less developed ecosystems to strengthen their scale, diversity, and growth potential. **IZTECH** seeks to consolidate and elevate its research excellence by building structured, long-term cooperation with advanced partners across Europe. The strategy involves leveraging existing international collaborations and the MAPIT platform to co-design institutional transformation paths, enhance researcher career trajectories, and foster joint research agendas that address shared societal challenges. This call presents a unique opportunity to institutionalize excellence mechanisms and to strengthen our role within the ERA.
MSCA CITIZENS	European Researchers' Night and Researchers at Schools 2026-2027	ATAP as a coordinator	**ATAP PROPOSAL: DREAMSCAPE** The European Researchers' Night targets the general public, addressing and attracting people regardless of the level of their scientific background, with a special focus on young people and their families, pupils and students, and notably those who do not have easy access to, and thus are less inclined to engage in STEAM fields (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics) or research activities. Eskişehir Metropolitan Municipality is the partner. Eskişehir Provincial Directorate for National Education and Anadolu University, Eskişehir Osmangazi University and Eskişehir Technical University will be the associated partners.
European Innovation Ecosystem	HORIZON-EIE-2026-01-CONNECT-02: Expanding Investment Ecosystems	ATAP as a partner	**ATAP PROPOSAL: SYNAPSE** Modernize and upgrade universities in research and innovation (R&I) through stronger collaboration locally and internationally. Promote a culture of excellence in science and the use of research results, especially in less research-intensive institutions and Widening countries. Accelerate reforms and strengthen R&I capacity in higher education, leading to better research careers, including outside academia. Boost digital and AI skills within the research and innovation activities of universities.

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			Improve global competitiveness and increase the impact of research across Europe's higher education system. Support the European Research Area (ERA) Policy Agenda 2022–2024, especially: Action 13: Empower higher education institutions Actions 1–9: Improve the internal market for knowledge Consortium: - ANADOLU ÜNİVERSİTESİ TÜRKİYE - ATAP A.Ş. TÜRKİYE - METU DTX TÜRKİYE - BCCI BULGARIA - UNWE BULGARIA - GALATI ROMAINE - VYTAUTAS MAGNUS LITHUANIA - TALTECH ESTONIA - V. N. KARAZIN KHARKIV NATIONAL UNIVERSITY UKRAINE - NETHERLANDS BUSINESS ACADEMIA NETHERLANDS - IASP SPAIN - ACCIO SPAIN - HOCHSCHULE DARMSTADTGERMANY
Improved reliability and optimised operations and maintenance for wind energy systems	HORIZON-CL5-2026-02-D3-07	**IZTECH**	The project to be proposed intends to establish a "Digital Twin Co-Pilot," an ecosystem of interacting LLM/SLM agents that will perform real-time anomaly detection, interpret local sensor data, communicate health status, and support predictive maintenance. IZTECH will mobilize its engineering research capacity and coastal wind field laboratories to contribute to new methodologies in predictive maintenance and smart grid integration. In this call, IZTECH envisions both a research and demonstration role, particularly in data-driven wind energy management and AI-supported fault detection.
Innovative solutions for a generative AI-powered digital spine of the EU energy system	HORIZON-CL5-2026-02-D3-19	**IZTECH**	The proposed concept AI-powered multimodal data processing for energy optimization/management tasks. IZTECH is forming a consortium with leading digital solution providers and research institutes to develop interoperable, secure, and scalable data platforms that enhance system integration and energy performance. The strategy centers on IZTECH's digital systems expertise, regional grid modelling efforts, and its active engagement in European Digital Innovation Hub networks. This call provides a pathway for IZTECH to link its local innovation potential with pan-European digital energy ambitions.
Implementing co-funded action plans for connected regional innovation	HORIZON-WIDERA-2025-05-ACCESS-01	**IZTECH**	VALLEY-IZTECH proposes a connected Izmir RIV building on the regional Smart Specialisation Strategies focusing on renewable energy meteorology, circular economy, and bioeconomy.

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valleys in widening countries			IZTECH aims to contribute actively to regional smart specialization by co-developing transformative innovation initiatives with public and private stakeholders. The proposed actions will reflect İzmir's regional priorities such as sustainable manufacturing, circular economy, and digitalization, while also addressing widening country challenges. As a key actor in İzmir's innovation ecosystem, IZTECH will focus on stakeholder co-creation, international visibility, and systemic capacity building for long-term impact.
HORIZON-CSA	HORIZON-WIDERA-2024-TALENTS-03	**IZTECH, WEG, BILTIR**	BALRAS will strengthen the Balkan Widening countries' integration into the European Research Area (ERA) by creating a Balkan Research Area (BRA) through cross-sectoral mobility. Two novel profiles—Research Scouts (academics in industry) and Innovation Explorers (industry in academia)—will drive knowledge transfer, applied research, and commercialization. Focusing on agricultural robotics and renewable energy, BALRAS bridges academia–industry time horizons, accelerates innovation, and supports regional growth in line with ERA priorities.
HORIZON-IA	HORIZON-CL2-2024-HERITAGE-ECCCH-01	**BILTIR**	The Heritage Synergy Cloud (HSC) project develops innovative tools and methods to strengthen the European Collaborative Cloud for Cultural Heritage (ECCCH). Using digital twin technology, AI, and data interconnectivity, HSC enhances documentation, visualization, and analysis for cultural heritage preservation and restoration. The project delivers accessible solutions through training, case studies, and user engagement, ensuring broad uptake across stakeholders. By tackling challenges of integration, usability, and sustainability, HSC advances Europe's cultural heritage protection while supporting digital and green transitions.
HORIZON-IA	HORIZON-CL5-2024-D4-02	**BILTIR**	The NEB-CAMPUS project translates the vision of the New European Bauhaus into sustainable, digitally enabled campus renovation. Using campuses as living labs, it integrates AI, AR/VR, and IoT solutions to drive energy efficiency, inclusivity, and cultural resonance. With 19 partners across 10 countries, the project ensures adaptability across regions, targeting 30% energy reduction, renewable integration, and biodiversity gains. By engaging citizens and fostering digital literacy, NEB-CAMPUS supports the European Green Deal, Digital Decade 2030, and EU Climate Neutrality Goals.
HORIZON-TMA-MSCA-SE	HORIZON-MSCA-2024-SE-01	**IZTECH, WEG, BILTIR**	The SE4BRA project fosters a Balkan Research Area (BRA) by bridging academia–industry gaps through structured secondments. It introduces Technical Secondments to boost research, transferable skills, and innovation in renewable energy and agri-robotics, and Leadership & Management Secondments to cultivate entrepreneurial mindsets and networking capacity. Central to this vision are Research Scouts (academics in industry) and Innovation Explorers (industry in academia), enabling cross-sectoral knowledge transfer, applied research, and commercialization. SE4BRA thus enhances mobility, reduces regional disparities, and drives technological and economic growth in line with ERA priorities.

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HORIZON-EIC	HORIZON-EIC-2025-PATHFINDEROPEN	**BILTIR**	The TASKCHAIN project redefines educational value chains by linking real-world business tasks with university learning through AI-driven semantic matching and micro-contracts. It introduces the verified task as a new unit of academic exchange, enabling modular, demand-responsive, and economically relevant learning. Leveraging NLP, decentralized ledgers, and credit-orchestration algorithms, TASKCHAIN creates traceable, accredited, and interoperable outcomes co-supervised by academia and industry. By bridging education and labour markets, the project drives pedagogical transformation, SME–university collaboration, and new governance models, laying the foundation for Web4.0 education.
DIGITAL-SIMPLE	DIGITAL-2025-EDIH-AC-08	**BILTIR, ATAP**	The AI4GreenTech Anatolia project, coordinated by Middle East Technical University, serves as a European Digital Innovation Hub to drive Türkiye's digital and green transition. Focusing on the machinery and automotive industries and public administrations, it delivers services across four pillars: test-before-invest, training and skills, finance access, and innovation networking. With facilities for AI, robotics, digital twins, and EuroHPC-based services, it accelerates trustworthy AI adoption, SME competitiveness, and sustainability. Aligned with Türkiye's National AI Strategy and the EU Digital Europe Programme, AI4GreenTech builds a strong multi-stakeholder ecosystem of 15 partners to foster growth and resilience.
The attribution to climate change, and improved forecasting of extreme and slow-onset climate- and weather-related events and their impacts	HORIZON-CL5-2025-06-D1-04	**KTO-STEDEC**	RECAST proposal aims to deliver a transformative, cross-sectoral, and citizen-centred adaptation framework. It integrates AI forecasting, digital twins, attribution science, and nature-based solutions, while embedding SSH perspectives and citizen science.
Strengthening the resilience of water systems and water sector to climate and global socio-economic change impacts	HORIZON-CL6-2025-02-CLIMATE-01	**KTO-STEDEC**	This project aims to make water systems in more resilient under climate change and socio-economic pressures with scenario-based early warning systems, digital twins, adaptive infrastructure and governance strategies (water allocation, community involvement, policy scenarios)
Exploring the potential of controlled environment agriculture (CEA)	HORIZON-CL6-2025-02-FARM2FORK-08	**KTO-STEDEC**	The DigiFarmLab project proposes to develop and test three Controlled Environment Agriculture (CEA) pilots—a vertical farm, a traditional greenhouse, and a hydroponic greenhouse—equipped with sensors and digital twin models to evaluate sustainable, efficiency-oriented crop production practices and integrate SMEs through Horizon Europe funding.
Preparing farmers, their workforce and advisors to the future of agriculture by providing the	HORIZON-CL6-2025-03-GOVERNANCE-14	**KTO-STEDEC**	Considered as most relevant as in line with the KTO Internationalization Roadmap. However preparations were stalled due to the capacity that can be mobilized during the Summer months.

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relevant knowledge, skills and competences at the right time and place			
Teaming for Excellence	HORIZON-WIDERA-2025-ACCESS-01-01-two-stage	**FINEST**	Analogous to the Teaming for Excellence call that funded the establishment of FinEst Centre, this recent Teaming call is an opportunity for growth and wider global impact
Deployment of state-of-the-art technologies in the area of cybersecurity	DIGITAL-ECCC-2024-DEPLOY-CYBER-07-KEYTECH	**FINEST**	In progress
Cooperation Partnerships for Higher Education	KA220-HED (ERASMUS+)	**FINEST**	In progress
Capacity building in the field of higher education	ERASMUS-EDU-2025-CBHE-STRAND-2	**FINEST**	In progress
Rethinking urban spaces towards climate neutrality	HORIZON-MISS-2024-CIT-01-01	**FINEST**	In progress
Zero-pollution cities	HORIZON-MISS-2024-CIT-01-02	**FINEST**	In progress
Innovative, Community-Integrated PV systems	HORIZON-CL5-2024-D3-02-06	**FINEST**	In progress
Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions Staff Exchanges	2024-2025	**FINEST, IZTECH**	Staff exchanges allow researchers from mid-class universities to work in leading institutions, gaining access to cutting-edge facilities, equipment, and specialized expertise
TÜBİTAK – GSRI (Greece) Call			A new collaboration agreement on R&I between Greek and Turkish national research councils presents a unique opportunity for the internationalization efforts of MAPIT RPEs.

6.3 Summary of Call Participation Strategies

The strategies applied across RPEs to strengthen competitiveness in Horizon Europe proposals are listed below:

ATAP-EDIC: ATAP's strategic approach for the calls is built on a synergistic model that leverages its dual role as both a coordinator and a partner to create a powerful innovation pipeline. Through the MSCA DREAMSCAPE project, ATAP will ignite public interest in STEAM and research in Eskişehir, creating a future talent pool. This foundational work is directly fed into the SYNAPSE project, where ATAP, in collaboration with a strong international consortium, will modernize local universities, boost their R&I capacity, and foster

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a culture of excellence. The outcomes—strengthened institutions and more investable startups—are then capitalized on in the WIDERA AITAP BRIDGE project, which ATAP will coordinate to specifically attract foreign venture capital, enhance visibility for local startups, and integrate the Eskişehir ecosystem into advanced European investment networks, thereby ensuring long-term sustainability and growth.

ATAP's Internationalization Strategy

ATAP A.Ş., as the managing entity of the Eskişehir Technology Development Zone and a key innovation actor in Turkey, approaches internationalization not as a stand-alone institutional goal, but as a catalyst for policy-aligned transformation, knowledge valorization, and European integration. Within the Horizon Europe framework, ATAP's internationalization strategy is guided by a threefold ambition: to build trust, to bridge ecosystems, and to transfer policy intelligence between Widening countries and Europe's innovation core.

From Peripheral Participant to Policy-Contributing Actor

Historically positioned at the interface of academia, industry, and public institutions, ATAP has leveraged its strong ties with national policy makers, particularly the Ministry of Industry and Technology, as a foundation for entering European-level innovation networks. While its prior international experience was limited to project execution (e.g. through a Horizon Europe partnership in MAPIT, and an almost €5M IPA-funded initiative for ETİM), ATAP is now shifting from implementer to influencer.

Our initiative SYNAPSE will provide ATAP a structured framework to move beyond bilateral partnerships and to take on a more proactive role in European policy ecosystems, particularly in fields such as:

- Green Deal-aligned innovation ecosystems
- Circular economy and digital entrepreneurship
- CoARA-aligned technology transfer and impact assessment

Building Trust Through Strategic Networks

A key pillar of ATAP's strategy is the development of long-term, trust-based international partnerships. Through Horizon Europe preparations ATAP is actively engaging with institutions, including technical universities, regional chambers, government agencies, and EU policy think tanks. Notably, its membership in the International Association of Science Parks (IASP) has opened doors to a global innovation policy community, supporting ATAP's shift from regional intermediary to international knowledge broker.

Although ATAP currently has no other institutional memberships beyond IASP, its growing interactions with ACCIO (Spain), NLBA (Netherlands), and Hochschule Darmstadt (Germany) are progressively strengthening its access to European innovation circuits, especially in the domains of technology transfer, regional innovation labs, and sustainable business models.

Bridging Ecosystems, Transferring Intelligence

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ATAP's internationalization model is not limited to participation, but emphasizes translation and replication. Its core strength lies in acting as a transmission belt between local actors in Widening countries and strategic policy agendas at the European level.

The internationalization of ATAP is no longer project-dependent; it is becoming identity-driven.

The organization's medium-term goal is to establish itself as a regional leader in European project-based policy transfer, particularly in domains aligned with the New European Innovation Agenda, Digital Europe, and the Green Deal. This includes:

- Initiating new Horizon consortia in circular economy and green innovation,
- Participating in ERA policy dialogue platforms as a contributor from the Widening context,
- Supporting policy learning across Widening institutions through best practice documentation and knowledge replication.

IZTECH-NIC: IZTECH strategically positions itself as an emerging research and innovation hub in Türkiye, aiming to strengthen its international visibility, institutional capacity, and regional innovation leadership through active participation in Horizon Europe. Our call engagement strategy is designed to align with both European policy priorities and regional development needs, with a strong emphasis on excellence, collaboration, and impact.

In the upcoming Horizon Europe calls, IZTECH plans to take on both **coordinator and partner roles**, depending on the scope and thematic alignment of the projects. For at least two targeted calls, we intend to assume the role of **project coordinator**, demonstrating our capacity to lead multi-stakeholder, interdisciplinary, and high-impact initiatives. In other calls, our strategy is to contribute as a **strategic partner**, bringing in our specialized expertise in areas such as regional innovation ecosystems, advanced engineering, digital transformation, and sustainable energy systems.

Our participation is also shaped by our institutional commitment to widening participation and to building strong, long-term partnerships within the European Research Area (ERA). In this context, we aim to establish robust collaborations with institutions from various EU Member States, with a particular interest in forming consortia with **Greek research and innovation actors**. Geographical proximity and shared regional challenges make Türkiye-Greece partnerships highly relevant for calls targeting smart specialization, energy transitions, and digital innovation.

IZTECH's approach is grounded in cross-sectoral cooperation, regional stakeholder engagement, and alignment with national and European strategic frameworks. Through its participation in Horizon Europe, IZTECH seeks not only to enhance its own institutional transformation but also to contribute to broader European goals related to sustainability, resilience, and competitiveness.

Through these four calls metioned above, IZTECH not only aligns its project portfolio with Horizon Europe's priorities but also reinforces its commitment to internationalization, excellence in science and innovation,

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and regional impact. Each proposal will serve as a building block for advancing both institutional and regional transformation.

METU-BILTIR: METU-BİLTİR participates in multiple Horizon Europe proposals as both coordinator and partner, strengthening scientific and industrial ties across Europe and the Balkans. The consortiums bring together actors from Türkiye, Germany, Switzerland, Estonia, and Ukraine, represented by universities, research centres, and industry federations. Strategic partnerships include leading institutions such as Fraunhofer (Germany), national industry organisations (MAKFED, TAYSAD, ASO), and partners from Switzerland as well as strong academic collaboration with Ukrainian universities and institutes, reflecting the EU's priority to integrate Ukraine more closely into the European Research Area.

If funded, these proposals would generate budgets ranging from €100,000 to €5 million per project. For METU, the expected outcome across successful projects is an allocation of around €2–3 million, consolidating METU-BİLTİR's role in advancing interdisciplinary research, industrial innovation, and regional integration within the ERA.

KTO-STEDEC: STEDEC's participation strategy in Horizon Europe is built on strengthening institutional capacity and expanding international cooperation. STEDEC actively invests in proposal development skills through regular training activities and supports its researchers in aligning their expertise with Horizon Europe Cluster 6 priorities, such as climate action, sustainable agriculture, and digitalisation. This approach ensures that academic and technical staff are well prepared to contribute to high-quality proposals, while also enhancing STEDEC's visibility and role in the European Research Area.

In parallel, the strategy emphasizes building strong networks with research institutions, universities, and private sector actors across Europe. By fostering synergies between scientific excellence and applied innovation, the university seeks to engage in projects that generate both academic impact and practical solutions. Engagement in Horizon Europe is therefore not only a tool for advancing research, but also a pathway to internationalisation, knowledge exchange, and long-term institutional growth in alignment with Europe's green and digital transitions.

TalTech - FinEst: FinEst Centre aims to be a coordinator in half, and a partner in the other half of the proposals. In the consortiums, on there are five non-Estonian countries involved. The countries are represented by two universities (University of further education in Austria and University of Prishtine in Kosovo) and three research centres (Ericsson telecommunaction s.p.a. (Italy), Technical Research Centre of Finland (VTT) and ATHINA-EREVNITIKO KENTRO KAINOTOMIAS STIS TECHNOLOGIES TIS PLIROFORIAS, TON EPIKOINONION KAI TIS GNOSIS (Greece). If funded, the proposals would provide a total of 881 000 € for the FC, typically for three or four years. The smallest budget of the proposals submitted during the spring 2025 was a bit under 100 000 € and the biggest slightly over 6M€.

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7. Building Synergies and Networks (Task T5.4: M1–M12)

7.1 Synergy Building Strategy

The MAPIT RPEs present a complementary partnership with the potential to mutually augment each other's capacities in pursuit of sustainable internationalization and deeper integration into the ERA. Each RPE brings distinct scientific, technological, and regional strengths—ranging from advanced manufacturing and precision agriculture to smart city solutions and renewable energy systems. This diversity creates a foundation for purposeful collaboration, where institutions can fill capability gaps, share infrastructure, and co-develop solutions aligned with European R&I priorities. By pooling expertise and resources, the RPEs can jointly overcome locked-in effects, increase participation in Horizon Europe, and accelerate their transformation into globally connected innovation actors. The synergies envisioned go beyond transactional collaboration and potentially aim at long-term interoperable digital systems, and a shared talent development and research management culture. Through aligned roadmaps and shared strategic foresight, the RPEs can collectively strengthen their roles in regional innovation ecosystems while positioning themselves as reliable contributors to transnational R&I missions.

The table below shows potential synergy areas among MAPIT RPEs as described in terms of common themes and specialization areas.

Table 10. MAPIT Synergy Portfolio: Thematic Table of Collaborative Opportunities

Theme	RPEs Involved	Synergy Description
Precision Agriculture & Climate Resilience	STEDEC, IZTECH	Integrating STEDEC's Farm Lab and sensor-based agricultural prototyping with IZTECH's renewable energy systems and AI forecasting tools to support climate-resilient farming.
AI & Robotics for Smart Manufacturing	BILTIR, ATAP, IZTECH	Developing AI-driven quality control, flexible scheduling, and robotic testing solutions jointly deployed across BILTIR's MaaS platform and ATAP's digital factory ecosystem.
Additive Manufacturing & Design	ATAP, STEDEC, BILTIR	Co-developing next-generation additive manufacturing capabilities, including 3D-printed components and prototyping workflows tailored to regional industrial needs.
Smart Cities & Digital Twins	FinEst, BILTIR, IZTECH	Leveraging FinEst's urban pilot projects with BILTIR's digital twin technology and IZTECH's IoT capabilities to create scalable smart city services and planning tools.
Circular & Sustainable Innovation	IZTECH, BILTIR, FinEst	Establishing closed-loop systems combining circular manufacturing (BILTIR) and sustainability standards (IZTECH) for applications in agriculture and urban infrastructure.
Certification & Standardization Initiatives	ATAP, STEDEC, BILTIR	Jointly adopting and disseminating NADCAP, EWF, and CE certification pathways to increase market readiness and compliance across manufacturing and agri-machinery domains.

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Testbeds & Demonstration Facilities	STEDEC, BILTIR, FinEst	Opening up RPE testing environments—like EMC labs (STEDEC), crash labs (BILTIR), and urban pilots (FinEst)—to partners for validation and joint experimentation.
Shared Digital Infrastructure & Tools	All RPEs	Co-developing interoperable digital platforms such as stakeholder CRMs (IZTECH), resource-sharing platforms (ATAP), and private clouds (BILTIR) to support multi-RPE services.
Research Management & Talent Development	All RPEs	Coordinating joint RMA training, Horizon proposal mentoring, and international secondment programs to build a professionalized R&I management community across all RPEs.
Horizon Europe Strategic Alignment	All RPEs	Coordinated participation in Horizon Europe partnerships and missions (e.g., Made in Europe, Smart Cities, RIV) based on complementary S3 specializations and joint roadmaps.

7.2 Synergy Building Activities

Participating in each other's Learning from the Future (LFF) conferences during the Spring of 2025 enabled MAPIT RPEs to better understand the strategic directions, institutional priorities, and operational realities of their peers. These immersive, foresight-driven events allowed participants to contribute to vision-building processes beyond their own institutional context, creating a shared language for transformation and fostering mutual recognition of complementary capabilities. The interactive backcasting exercises revealed overlapping ambitions in areas like AI, sustainability, and talent development, while also surfacing opportunities for infrastructure sharing and co-investment. As a result, RPEs were able to identify concrete entry points for collaboration and lay the groundwork for interoperable systems, joint training initiatives, and coordinated participation in Horizon Europe. The LFF format also cultivated trust and strategic empathy among institutions, reinforcing their commitment to collective impact within the

A second activity for synergy building was organized during Summer 2025. An online synergy-building workshop among MAPIT RPEs using the European Excellence Initiative (EEI) as a thematic anchor took place on 22.08.2025. The sessions focused on identifying shared scientific domains and institutional reform priorities that align with EEI objectives. Participants discussed complementary strengths in areas such as digital manufacturing, energy transition, and urban innovation. Each RPE outlined its roadmap goals and explored how these could converge in a joint Network of Excellence concept. The discussion emphasized mutual visibility, interoperable infrastructures, and readiness for consortia-building under future EEI calls.

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8. Conclusion and Next Steps

During the first year of MAPIT, the participating RPEs have taken significant strides toward their internationalization goals. Building on the foresight-driven roadmaps developed after their Learning from the Future Conferences, each RPE has begun implementing targeted actions across technology adoption, productivity enhancement, and talent development. These actions have strengthened their institutional capacities, enhanced their visibility in European networks, and established the groundwork for long-term participation in Horizon Europe. common measures and they are complemented by RPE-specific initiatives in smart specialization areas, ranging from precision agriculture and digital manufacturing to renewable energy systems and smart cities.

A key achievement of this period has been the cultivation of synergies both within the consortium and with European stakeholders. Through joint events, clustering activities, and participation in the Learning from the Future conferences, the RPEs have advanced from isolated national actors to more connected and strategically positioned members of the European Research Area. Consultancy, coaching, and mentoring support have further ensured that roadmap actions were not only launched but also aligned with ERA priorities, enabling each RPE to sharpen its value proposition for international partnerships.

Looking ahead, the next implementation period will focus on scaling these initial steps into more mature outcomes. Immediate priorities include consolidating stakeholder networks, deepening participation in Horizon Europe calls, operationalizing new facilities and services, and advancing talent mobility schemes. Special emphasis will be placed on sustaining synergies across the MAPIT consortium, fostering joint proposals, and embedding RPEs into long-term European partnerships. The actions scheduled for M13–M24 are thus designed not only to expand institutional capacity but also to ensure durable integration into ERA ecosystems. Together, these efforts mark the transition from early-stage internationalization to a more consolidated presence in European R&I landscapes, positioning MAPIT beneficiaries as competitive and collaborative actors for the years ahead.

8.1. Progress Monitoring and KPIs

Progress in the first 12 months of MAPIT has been systematically tracked against the KPIs defined in the *Scale and Significance* section of Proposal Part B: Technical Description, as well as the expected outcomes tied to the three project objectives.

Objective 1 – Overcoming locked-in effects and increasing upstream competitiveness.
The key outcome here is the successful development and use of internationalization roadmaps leading to sustained Horizon Europe participation. The KPI target is for each RPE to achieve at least **three proposal participations** with highly synergistic consortia. In the first project year, preparatory steps were completed: each RPE finalized its roadmap, identified target Horizon Europe calls, and engaged potential partners. While few proposals have yet been submitted within M1–M12, pre-consortium dialogues and topic

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scouting have begun, placing RPEs on track to meet the proposal participation target in the second period, starting with calls that have September 2025 (M13) deadlines.

Objective 2 – Building capacity of R&I staff.
The KPI target is the delivery of the *Future Studies* programme to at least **20 R&I staff** across the five RPEs, equipping them as trainers and future leaders of ERA integration. By the end of the first period, curricula were designed, pilot modules tested, and initial cohorts enrolled in training. Early indicators show improved skills in international research management, fulfilling the interim milestones while preparing for the full roll-out in M13–M24.

Objective 3 – Building synergies and clustering with ERA stakeholders.
The expected outcome is the establishment of shared "desired futures" in at least **three sectors**, with **20 ERA stakeholders clustered** around aligned R&I policies. In the first year, the RPEs used Learning from the Future Conferences and clustering events to create draft future scenarios and thematic portfolios. More than a dozen ERA-relevant stakeholders have already been engaged, demonstrating strong momentum toward the KPI target.

Cross-cutting Scale and Significance KPIs.

- The **AI Domain Expert tool** has been piloted internally; its integration into EDIH networks is scheduled for the next period.
- Human resource development indicators are positive, with secondments, trainings, and peer-learning activities initiated across all RPEs.
- Ecosystem impact is emerging, as SMEs and regional actors are increasingly involved in MAPIT activities, ensuring that synergies are both upstream (with ERA) and downstream (with regional innovation valleys).

Overall, monitoring shows that the project has achieved its **baseline milestones**: roadmaps finalized, capacity development launched, and clustering initiated. The foundations are solid for reaching the quantitative KPI targets in the second period (M13–M24), with early evidence of transformative effects on internationalization trajectories.

8.2. Immediate Next Steps

The upcoming project year (M13–M24) will be decisive in advancing MAPIT beneficiaries from preparatory actions to consolidated international engagement. The focus will be on translating the strategic foundations laid in Year 1 into visible outputs in technology use, productivity enhancement, and talent development, while ensuring stronger integration with the European Research Area.

For **STEDEC**, the immediate priorities include launching the **Farm Lab feasibility study** and strengthening its role in **advocacy for agricultural experts**, supported by digital platform enhancements. These steps will

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connect regional agrifood actors with European standards (ModernAKIS, IUCN) and submit a proposal for the Exploring the potential of controlled environment agriculture (CEA) Horizon call due September 2025.

ATAP will move from planning to operationalizing its **Industry 4.0 Resource Sharing Platform** and initiating **study visits to leading R&I hubs**. This will be coupled with the set-up of the **Innovation Capacity Development Centre**, supporting hybrid talent development and embedding ATAP within European networks.

BILTIR will prioritize the creation of its **International Collaborations Office**, expansion of **training programmes in Horizon project management**, and development of pilot **Manufacturing-as-a-Service (MaaS) packages**. These will showcase service-oriented R&I and strengthen ties with EIT Manufacturing and Processes4Planet.

For **FinEst Centre**, the next year will focus on formalizing its **mission-oriented services** beyond pilots, scaling up selected **urban innovation projects**, and initiating steps toward a sustainable post-FinEst Twins business model. Particular emphasis will be given to **cross-border partnerships** in the NetZero Cities and Climate-Neutral & Smart Cities missions.

IZTECH will advance its transition to a **University 4.0 model** by deploying its **CRM-based stakeholder management system**, initiating **territorial innovation projects** linked to the Western Anatolia Innovation Valley, and deepening its role in renewable energy and AI/robotics collaborations. Horizon Europe project submissions in these domains will be a critical milestone.

Collectively, the second-year actions represent a shift from planning to execution: digital systems will be deployed, pilot facilities activated, human resource training scaled, and European partnerships formalized. The MAPIT consortium will also concentrate on **joint proposal development**, **peer-learning exchanges**, and **clustering activities** to strengthen synergies across RPEs. These immediate steps will ensure that by the end of the second project year, the beneficiaries are not only more capable individually but also better positioned collectively as sustainable, visible actors in the ERA.

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