

EDIH innovATE

EDIH innovATE - The European Digital Innovation Hub for Agrifood, Timber and Energy

Programm / Ausschreibung	Digitale Technologien, Digitale Technologien, EDIH (international) Ausschreibung 2022	Status	laufend
Projektstart	01.10.2022	Projektende	30.09.2025
Zeitraum	2022 - 2025	Projektaufzeit	36 Monate
Keywords	Artificial Intelligence & Decision support - Prototyping - Robotics - SME support - Digital twins - Ecosystem building - Agriculture, Food, Forestry, Timber, Energy and Environment		

Projektbeschreibung

Kleine und mittlere Unternehmen (KMU) sind das Rückgrat der österreichischen und europäischen Wirtschaft, Innovationstreiber und wesentlich für unseren Wohlstand. Digitalisierung und Innovationsfähigkeit sind für KMU entscheidend, um im internationalen Wettbewerb bestehen zu können und um das Doppelziel der Europäischen Union (EU) - grüne Transformation und digitale Transformation - zu erreichen. Der European Digital Innovation Hub (EDIH) Kandidat EDIH innovATE will diese Ziele unterstützen und eine nachhaltige und faire europäische Wirtschaft schaffen. EDIH innovATE erreicht dies durch die Beschleunigung der digitalen Transformation von KMU im Agrar-, Lebensmittel-, Holz- und Energiesektor (ATE), indem es sich auf künstliche Intelligenz (AI), cyber-physische Systeme (CPS) und fortgeschrittene digitale Fähigkeiten konzentriert. Durch die Verbesserung der Digitalisierung in den ATE-Branchen stärkt EDIH innovATE die Fähigkeit der Welt, eine wachsende Bevölkerung zu ernähren, das Waldsterben zu verhindern, Ressourcen effizient zu nutzen, grüne Energie zu erzeugen und ein florierendes Ökosystem zu erhalten. Ziel von EDIH innovATE ist es, den Innovationsstandort Österreich und Europa voranzubringen, indem wir hochqualifizierte KMU ausbilden, neue Unternehmen und Arbeitsplätze schaffen, der Landflucht entgegenwirken und über das EDIH-Netzwerk Möglichkeiten zum Austausch mit den Besten in Europa schaffen. Durch die verstärkte Digitalisierung fördern wir auch die Resilienz in Krisen, z.B. Klimawandel, Globalisierung, COVID-19-Krise. Aus diesem Grund fungiert EDIH innovATE als zentrale Anlaufstelle für digitale Innovationen in der ATE-Industrie für KMU und bietet praktische Schulungen, Workshops, Test-before-invest-Aktivitäten, Netzwerkveranstaltungen, Prototyp-Projekte, KMU-Accelerator und Zugang zu Finanzmitteln. EDIH innovATE stützt sich auf die außergewöhnliche Erfolgsbilanz des nationalen Digital Innovation Hub (DIH) innovATE und seiner zehn renommierten Partnerorganisationen, die auf Digitalisierung und Industrie spezialisiert sind und zusammen mit dem DIH das EDIH innovATE-Konsortium bilden.

Abstract

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) are the backbone of the Austrian and European economy, drivers of innovation and essential for our prosperity. Digitalization and innovation skills are crucial for SME to be able to survive international competition in the future and to achieve the European Union's (EU) twin objective of a green transition and digital

transformation. The European Digital Innovation Hub (EDIH) candidate EDIH innovATE aims to support these objectives and to create a sustainable and fair European economy. EDIH innovATE achieves this by accelerating the digital transformation of SME in the agriculture, food, timber, and energy sector (ATE) by focusing on Artificial Intelligence (AI), Cyber- Physical Systems (CPS) and Advanced Digital Skills. By improving digitalization in the ATE industries EDIH innovATE strengthens the world's ability to feed a growing population, prevent forest decline, use resources efficiently, generate green energy and keep a thriving ecosystem. EDIH innovATE's goal is to advance Austria and Europe as a location for innovation by training highly qualified SME workers, creating new companies and jobs, counteracting rural exodus, and creating opportunities for exchange with the best in Europe through the EDIH network. Through increased digitalization, we also promote resilience in crises, e.g., climate change, globalization, COVID-19 crisis. That is why EDIH innovATE acts as one-stop-shop for digital innovation in the ATE industries for SME offering hands-on trainings, workshops, test-before-invest activities, networking events, prototype projects, SME accelerator and access to finance. EDIH innovATE builds its experience on an exceptional track record of the national Digital Innovation Hub (DIH) innovATE and its 10 renown digitalization and industry expert partner organizations that together with the DIH build the EDIH innovATE consortium.

Endberichtkurzfassung

The European Digital Innovation Hub (EDIH) INNOVATE, based in Vienna, Austria, plays a pivotal role in supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), midcap businesses, and public institutions on their journey to digital transformation. Launched in February 2022, EDIH INNOVATE began by addressing the specific needs of SMEs in agriculture, timber, forestry, and energy sectors. As the hub grew, its services expanded to align with broader sectors such as circular economy, food production and artificial intelligence, ensuring that its offerings met the evolving demands of digitalization across various industries.

The strategic expansion of EDIH INNOVATE's portfolio aimed to address key gaps in digitalization, particularly in sectors such as agriculture, timber, forestry, circular economy and energy. By integrating forward-thinking technologies, the hub has empowered businesses to modernize their processes, improve operational efficiency, and foster sustainability. Through various initiatives, EDIH INNOVATE has worked to raise the digital maturity of its stakeholders, ensuring that they are well-prepared for the challenges of the future.

During the reporting period, EDIH INNOVATE achieved three EDIH Network badge milestones.

We received the Training and Skills Development badge (360), confirming the strong scale and quality of our SME upskilling activities across multiple formats.

We also earned the Networking and Access to Innovation Ecosystems badge (360), reflecting intensive cooperation with regional, national, and European partners and the creation of new innovation links for SMEs.

Finally, the Digital Maturity Assessment badge (120) highlights the breadth of baseline and follow-up DMAs completed, enabling robust monitoring of digital progress. Together, these badges document high visibility, active ecosystem participation, and measurable impact delivery.

These recognitions also serve as an external validation of our customer-journey approach. The two 360 badges demonstrate

that awareness building and capability development are reaching a wide audience, while simultaneously connecting companies to relevant innovation actors. The DMA badge shows that this engagement translates into structured assessment and evidence-based follow-up, supporting continuous improvement at SME level. Achieving all three badges in parallel indicates balanced performance across outreach, service delivery, and monitoring. This strengthens our positioning within the EDIH network and provides a clear signal to stakeholders that EDIH INNOVATE is delivering both scale and depth: broad participation, strong partnership activity, and measurable progress in digital maturity.

At EDIH Innovate, we provide a structured and flexible customer journey, guiding clients through our diverse service offerings to ensure a seamless and tailored experience. Our goal is to make digital transformation accessible by matching organizations with the right support at each stage of their innovation process.

Our customer journey follows a clear, needs-driven logic that supports SMEs from first orientation to real implementation. The process is designed to be flexible, but it typically moves step by step: first we clarify where the company stands and what it needs, then we build knowledge and capability, afterwards we enable testing and validation, and finally we support implementation and scaling of concrete digitalization projects. This ensures that every SME receives the right support at the right time, without being pushed into formats that do not match its readiness level.

The entry point into this journey is the Digital Consultation Hour. It is the first structured contact where we assess the client's situation, challenges, and ambitions. Based on this initial diagnosis, we jointly define which format (or sequence of formats) is most suitable. In this way, the Digital Consultation Hour acts as the gateway that connects SMEs to a tailored pathway across Work packages 3 and 4.

Formats:

Digital Consultation Hour (WP3): First needs assessment and orientation; defines the best next step.

Workshop (WP3): Practical sessions to build understanding and readiness on specific digital topics.

Innovator Circle (WP3): Peer-to-peer exchange with expert input to shape ideas and collaborations.

Trend Radar (WP3): Structured overview of relevant technology and market trends for SMEs.

Digital Academy (WP3): Deeper, structured learning to build internal digital skills.

Digital Play (WP3): Hands-on, low-barrier experimentation with tools and methods.

Prototype Bootcamp (WP3): Intensive sprint to turn ideas into testable prototypes.

Test Before Invest (WP4): Real-life validation of solutions before major investments.

Funding Compass (WP4): Guidance to identify and access suitable funding and financing schemes.

Good Practice Visit (WP4): Exposure to proven digital solutions through visits to exemplary cases.

Impact Tracker (WP4): Measurement of progress and outcomes to make impact visible.

Accelerator (WP4): High-intensity support to implement and scale digitalisation projects.

Overall, the journey stands out because it is individualized and stage-appropriate: SMEs can enter easily, progress at their own pace, and move into more intensive formats only when they are ready. At the same time, the portfolio covers the full

cycle, from awareness and capability building to prototyping, testing, funding, and scaling, so companies are supported from first question to measurable digital impact.

Two of the cornerstone formats at EDIH Innovate are Panorama and the TECHHOUSE ELEVATOR Accelerator Program, both designed to drive digital transformation and innovation across industries.

TECHHOUSE ELEVATOR Accelerator Program:

The TECHHOUSE ELEVATOR Accelerator is a structured program designed to support startups in enhancing their digital capabilities, business strategies, and market readiness. Since its inception, we have successfully hosted five editions, each tailored to meet the evolving needs of startups operating in various sectors. So far, the program has focused on industries such as agriculture, timber, energy, and the circular economy. Through this program, startups gain the necessary tools and insights to scale their businesses and integrate digital solutions effectively. The ELEVATOR program has delivered tangible outcomes, with startups achieving significant milestones and equity investments as a result of participating in this format. Three standout success stories worth highlighting specifically are Circunomics GmbH, Europe's leading B2B Battery lifecycle platform, Rebaba AB creating local circular battery systems and Europack Bulgaria improving the value of food products through waste-free production. Circunomics received an Series A equity investment of 8.13M EUR on January 2025, Rebaba received an Series Seed equity investment of 498K EUR on January and Europack 65K EUR in 2024.

The Panorama

Panorama is the largest format within EDIH Innovate, designed as an interactive festival that brings together industry experts, businesses, researchers, and policymakers to explore the future of digitalization. Since its launch, we have hosted two highly successful editions: Panorama 2023 and Panorama 2024, which has brought together a total of 574 participants.

KPI Overview:

Pursuant to these initiatives, the EDIH INNOVATE project has exceeded various key performance indicator (KPI) targets, underscoring its effectiveness in driving tangible outcomes.

In summary, the results and impacts of the EDIH INNOVATE project, presented in detail below, extend far beyond immediate outcomes, contributing to broader awareness-building initiatives, fostering cross-border cooperation, and positioning SMEs for long-term success in the digital era. We are excited about the innovation journey we started with our SME and other stakeholder partners in the course of EDIH INNOVATE and about continuing this journey in an even stronger setting by merging our activities into our successor EDIH, the newly merged EDIH AI5innovation. EDIH AI5innovation combines the best of both predecessor EDIHs, our EDIH INNOVATE and EDIH AI5production and starts operations in November 2025.

Projektkoordinator

- "Digital Innovation Hub innov:ATE" - Österreichs digitaler Innovationshub für Land-, Holz-, Forst- und Energiewirtschaft

Projektpartner

- Blue Minds Solutions GmbH
- SBA Research gemeinnützige GmbH
- Montanuniversität Leoben
- THI Techhouse GmbH
- Business Upper Austria - OÖ Wirtschaftsagentur GmbH
- Universität Graz
- Kompetenzzentrum Holz GmbH
- Josephinum Research
- Fachhochschule Salzburg GmbH