

SustainX

D5.5 Project risk management & sustainability plan – Impact and ambition



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Deliverable Information

D5.5 Project risk management & sustainability plan			
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Executive Summary

The aim of this deliverable is to provide all necessary information related to the management of the project and the quality plan. These include the governance of the project with all related roles and responsibilities, the means, and processes to execute the day-to-day activities, the communication within the consortium as well as with external stakeholders and Digital Transformation Accelerator DTA, the quality assurance plan and risk management.





Contents

Definitions and acronyms	5
1. Introduction.....	6
2. Description of the Project.....	6
2.1. Project Scope and Objectives	6
2.2. Project Overview - SustainX (101180410)	7
2.3. Project Milestones.....	9
2.4. Project Deliverables.....	15
2.5. Project Work Plan and Breakdown.....	15
3. Project risk management & sustainability plan - Impact and ambition.....	16
3.1. Risk Management Introduction.....	16
3.2. Methodology	17
3.3. Risk Management Plan	17
3.4. Identified Risks	18
3.5. Sustainability Strategy	20
3.6. Sustainability and continuation	21
3.7. Contribution to Impact and Ambition.....	23
3.7.1 The impacts of the project.....	26
3.7.2 Direct impacts and effects at the end of the project	27
3.7.3 Environmental, territorial, and social impact.....	37
4. Conclusions.....	40





Definitions and acronyms

AB – Advisory Board

AI – Artificial Intelligence

CA – Consortium Agreement

CO – Community Outreach

DIE – Digital Innovation Experts

DIH – Digital Innovation Hub

DIZ – Digital Innovation Zone

DIZ NGO – ASOCIATIA DIGITAL INNOVATION ZONE ZONA DE INOVARE DIGITALA

DMP – Data Management Plan

DTA – Digital Transformation Accelerator

EB – Executive Board

EC – European Commission

EDIH DIZ – European Digital Innovation Hub Digital Innovation Zone

EEN – Enterprise Europe Network

EU – European Union

FA – Financial Administrator

GA – Grant Agreement

KET – Key enabling technologies

MS – Milestone

NGO – Non-profit Organization

PC – Project Coordinator

Project name: SustainX: Fostering Sustainable Digital Innovation Investment

Project acronym: SustainX

PM – Project Manager

PMBOK – Project Management Body of Knowledge

PU – Public

RIS – Research and Innovation Strategy

SEN – Sensitive

SME – Small and medium-sized enterprises

SO – Specific Objective

WP – Working Packages

WPL – Working Packages leads



1. Introduction

The SustainX project is a strategic initiative aimed at boosting innovation in less developed European regions (Romania, Greece, Bulgaria, Latvia, Canary Islands), primarily through enhancing the capabilities of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). This project is significant in facilitating Europe's transition to a Green and Digital Economy. By leveraging the expertise and resources of a diverse consortium, SustainX addresses the unique challenges faced by these regions in fostering innovation and technological advancement.

The project's objectives are multifaceted, focusing on developing internal capacities, fostering interregional innovation collaboration, validating pilot approaches, designing solutions for regional challenges, and piloting a one-stop-shop support concept for innovation investment projects. SustainX is distinctive in its approach to utilizing the competencies of its consortium members across various sectors, each contributing to the overall goal of accelerating the Green and Digital Transition of the economy. The project involves a blend of digital and in-person collaboration methods, ensuring effective communication and integration across all project strands.

The consortium's structure and strategy are aligned with the shared specialization areas of "Digital Transformation" and "Sustainable Innovation," highlighting the project's commitment to addressing the EU's priorities in Green and Digital Transition, Smart Manufacturing, and Deep Tech Innovation. SustainX is set to deliver significant impacts, including enhancing regional cohesion, political stability, and boosting the EU's economic and political competitiveness.

With its emphasis on individualized approaches, leveraging cross-sectoral networks, and a multiplier approach for maximum outreach and impact, SustainX stands as a beacon for innovation-driven regional development in the EU.

2. Description of the Project

2.1. Project Scope and Objectives

SustainX aims to increase the innovative capacities of the less developed countries' SMEs, as those are the main type of businesses in most EU regions. Business plan development, structured and strategic idea and innovation management and securing financing are commonly known limitations for innovation success, hence support on these regards (among others) is essential.

Nonetheless, there are other more subtle factors to be addressed, such as the small size of many SMEs, lack of specific thematic know-how or even some region-specific challenges which will be determined following an individual analysis.

In this regard, SustainX seeks to match SMEs complementarities among themselves and facilitate know-how transfer and joint ventures as well as strategic collaboration sharing resources for innovative projects development both from experts to beneficiaries, as well as via peer-learning. There is an unexploited gap for SMEs from different EU regions in sharing their different markets but combining strengths, to develop a common core for a product or service, and then define their specific needs for their specific market.

To achieve this, relevant specific objectives have been set:

Specific objective SO1: Develop internal capacities of consortium partners to improve their innovation investment approach and identify SMEs specific needs.

Specific objective SO2: Develop solid interregional innovation collaboration that will ensure a future funnel of SME applications for other I3 strands.

Specific objective SO3: Validate the pilot approach on representative SMEs trained on representative topics that hinder their participation to other I3 strands.

Specific objective SO4: Design towards challenge-solutions and start solving region-specific challenges, that hinder successful implementation of S3 strategies.

Specific objective SO5: Pilot a localization approach as one-stop-shop support concept for SMEs and other stakeholders from the quadruple-helix who are involved in innovation investment projects and start scaling its best practice.

2.2. Project Overview – SustainX (101180410)

SustainX, funded under the I3-2023-CAP2b call, aims to foster sustainable digital innovation and investment in less developed European regions. The project supports the scale-up of deep tech solutions and innovation ecosystems through interregional cooperation. It focuses on digitalization, green transition, and circular economy, aligning with EU policy priorities and the New European Innovation Agenda.

Implementation Time Frame

The action officially started on **1 January 2024** and will run for **24 months**, until **31 December 2025**.

Stakeholders

The consortium is coordinated by **Asociația Digital Innovation Zone (DIZ)**, with six partners: ARC Fund (Bulgaria), TUIASI (Romania), Fundación Santa Cruz Sostenible (Spain), iED (Greece), IMP³rove (Germany), and LTC (Latvia), captured in Table 1. Each partner is responsible for delivering specific Work Packages aligned with their regional expertise and innovation capacities.



Risks and Dependencies

The project depends on effective interregional collaboration, timely stakeholder engagement, and the success of regional pilot implementations. Key risks include:

- **Delays in policy integration** at regional level
- **Insufficient engagement** from SMEs or public bodies
- **Technical dependencies** on digital platforms and tools for collaboration
- **Economic or regulatory changes** in the target regions

Mitigation strategies are built into the work plan, including continuous monitoring, clear communication structures, and fallback mechanisms via the consortium agreement and governance model.

Table 1 SustainX consortium

PARTICIPANTS					
No.	Role	Short name	Legal name	Country	PIC
1	COO	DIZ	ASOCIATIA DIGITAL INNOVATION ZONE ZONA DE INOVARE DIGITALA	RO	887761946
2	BEN	ARC Fund	APPLIED RESEARCH AND COMMUNICATIONS FUND	BG	999815376
3	BEN	TUIASI	UNIVERSITATEA TEHNICA GHEORGHE ASACHI DIN IASI	RO	999853303
4	BEN	SANTA CRUZ	FUNDACION CANARIA SANTA CRUZ SOSTENIBLE	ES	876741679
5	BEN	ιED	INSTITOUTO ANAPTIXIS EPICHEIRIMATIKOTITAS ASTIKI ETAIREIA	EL	998069182
6	BEN	IMP ³ ROVE	IIMP ³ ROVE - EUROPEAN INNOVATION MANAGEMENT ACADEMY EWIV	DE	937069277
7	BEN	LTC	LATVIJAS TEHNOLOGISKAIS CENTRS NODIBINAJUMS	LV	999939342



2.3. Project Milestones

The SustainX project has 14 key milestones that mark significant progress points throughout its lifetime. These milestones, strategically distributed across different phases of the project, serve as critical checkpoints to ensure the successful implementation of planned activities and the achievement of objectives. A detailed summary of these milestones, including their name, working package number, lead beneficiary, means of verification and due date, is presented in Table 2.

Key Milestones

- **Month 1:** Project kickoff and competence mapping initiated
- **Month 6:** Skills development activities underway
- **Month 12:** First innovation investment projects evaluated
- **Month 18:** Ecosystem building events and tools piloted
- **Month 24:** Final outputs delivered, including best practices and policy recommendations

Table 2 Milestones of SustainX project

Milestones					
No	Milestone Name	WP No	Lead Beneficiary	Means of Verification	Due Date (month)
1	MS1 Detailed Workplan for project activities set-up	WP1	1 - DIZ	Workplan document	1
2	MS2 Capability mapping of consortium partners finalized	WP1	6 - IMP ³ ROVE	Capability Mapping report	4
3	MS3 Detailed action plans for respective region	WP1	2 - ARC Fund	Based on the analysis of strengths and weaknesses of the targeted regions, detailed action plans are created / revised. Action plans created	4





Milestones					
No	Milestone Name	WP No	Lead Beneficiary	Means of Verification	Due Date (month)
4	MS1 Consortium group trainings conducted	WP2	6 - IMP ³ ROVE	On-site consortium trainings are successfully conducted. Follow-up materials have been distributed and feedback has been collected via an online feedback survey. Consortium members are sufficiently enabled to support and train stakeholders in their regions as well as to network and expand regional innovation ecosystems. Consortium group training documentation. Feedback survey	7
5	MS2 SME Training Phase completed	WP2	6 - IMP ³ ROVE	All SME trainings have been held (regionspecific SME trainings, virtual SME trainings, Peer-learning events). Follow-up information has been sent to participants and feedback has been collected from the participants via an online feedback	18



Milestones					
No	Milestone Name	WP No	Lead Beneficiary	Means of Verification	Due Date (month)
				survey. SME training documentation. Feedback surveys	
6	MS1 Potential innovation investment projects identified	WP3	3 - TUIASI	Developed innovation infrastructure with identified areas and topics for innovation diffusion policy measures for investments, open markets, value chain participation Interregional investment ecosystem mapping report, including list of potential innovation investment projects for each region	14
7	MS2 Improved innovation infrastructure for successful technology transfer & SME localized support	WP3	1 - DIZ	Developed innovation infrastructure with identified areas and topics for innovation diffusion policy measures for investments, open markets, value chain participation List of individually supported SMEs (incl.scope of individual support) Pre-assessment tool for SMEs 13 One-stop-	23



Milestones					
No	Milestone Name	WP No	Lead Beneficiary	Means of Verification	Due Date (month)
				shop concept presentation	
8	MS1 Learning Journey 4-day event	WP4	5 - iED	Learning Journey completed; List of participants, publication of the event, and Evaluation report created Learning Journey report (incl. list of participants, content, feedback survey evaluation, etc.)	16
9	MS2 Touchdown event	WP4	5 - iED	Touchdown Event completed; List of participants, publication of the event, and Evaluation report created Touchdown Event report (incl. list of participants, content, feedback survey evaluation, after movie etc.)	24
10	MS1 Marketing strategy and stakeholder engagement plan finalized	WP5	5 - iED	Finalize a comprehensive marketing strategy and stakeholder engagement plan to increase project visibility and encourage	3



Milestones					
No	Milestone Name	WP No	Lead Beneficiary	Means of Verification	Due Date (month)
				stakeholder participation, with a particular focus on engaging SMEs and policymakers. Marketing and stakeholder outreach plan document	
11	MS2 Project risk management plan and sustainability plan developed	WP5	1 - DIZ	Develop a project risk management plan and sustainability plan to ensure that project objectives are achieved. Focus on risk mitigation measures and integrating a gender and sustainability dimension into project activities and outputs. Project risk management and sustainability plan document	3
12	MS3 Localization support program for associations and clusters launched	WP5	1 - DIZ	Launch the one-stop-shop localization support concept for associations and clusters in the targeted regions. Ensure the successful implementation of the program and monitor its progress towards achieving the desired	12



Milestones					
No	Milestone Name	WP No	Lead Beneficiary	Means of Verification	Due Date (month)
				outcomes. Pilot successfully launched	
13	MS4 One-stop-shop localization support system in North-East Romania region fully operationalized	WP5	1 - DIZ	Establish a fully operationalized one-stop shop localization support system in the North-East Romania region. Provide SMEs with the necessary resources and support to grow their businesses and become more competitive in the global marketplace, via innovation investment interregional collaboration. Successfully supported initial 10 "clients" of the one-stop-shop	19
14	MS5 Sustainability roadmap finalized	WP5	1 - DIZ	Finalize the sustainability roadmap to ensure long-term development of the targeted regions and a sustainable project success. The roadmap provides a framework for the future collaboration among	24



Milestones					
No	Milestone Name	WP No	Lead Beneficiary	Means of Verification	Due Date (month)
				consortium members. Sustainability roadmap	

2.4. Project Deliverables

SustainX is structured around 5 core Work Packages (WPs) and a total of 25 deliverables, each delivering concrete outputs that support regional innovation investment:

WP1 – Project Management: Ensures smooth coordination, financial control, and risk management throughout the 24-month duration. Key deliverables include the Data Management Plan and periodic progress reports.

WP2 – Capacity Building: Focuses on strengthening regional stakeholder skills through tailored training, mentoring, and peer learning sessions. Outputs include a competence mapping report, training materials, and engagement summaries.

WP3 – Innovation Investment Projects: Supports regional actors in developing and scaling innovation projects. Key deliverables include a pipeline of investment cases and documentation of implemented support mechanisms.

WP4 – Ecosystem Development: Builds sustainable collaboration models across regions through matchmaking events, a digital collaboration platform, and a shared repository of tools and good practices.

WP5 – Dissemination and Policy Impact: Ensures visibility and policy uptake through communication campaigns, policy briefs, and a final public report highlighting success stories and policy recommendations.

Each deliverable is aligned with a milestone and contributes directly to the project's long-term goal of boosting sustainable innovation in less developed European regions.

2.5. Project Work Plan and Breakdown

The workplan of the project is organized in 5 Work Packages presented in Table 3 respectively with the responsible beneficiary and the assigned effort in person months. The work plan will be conducted in one cycle, M1-M24.



Table 3 SustainX Work Packages

Staff effort per participant (Work packages - Effort screen)						
Participant	WP1	WP2	WP3	WP4	WP5	Total Person-Months
1 - DIZ	6.91	7.77	12.13	4.58	8.88	40.27
2 - ARC Fund	3.18	5.81	3.46	2.74	4.02	19.21
3 - TUIASI	0.78	5.81	4.02	2.74	4.02	17.37
4 - SANTA CRUZ	0.78	10.84	3.46	2.74	4.02	21.84
5 - iED	1.1	5.8	3.5	8.5	12.1	31
6 - IMP ³ ROVE	3	17.5	3	2	2	27.5
7 - LTC	1	4	5	4	4	18
Total Person-Months	16.7	57.5	34.5			
	5	3	7	27.3	39.04	175.19

3. Project risk management & sustainability plan - Impact and ambition

The **Project Risk Management & Sustainability Plan** forms a foundational element of the SustainX initiative's project governance and long-term impact assurance. These deliverable outlines key risk mitigation strategies and sustainability approaches for ensuring the effectiveness and continuity of project results beyond the funding period.

Objectives

- Establish comprehensive risk management mechanisms to address project uncertainties.
- Embed sustainability considerations (economic, social, environmental, institutional) into project activities.
- Define pathways to extend SustainX's impact post-project, especially in less developed EU regions.

3.1. Risk Management Introduction

Risk management refers to all activities undertaken for identifying, analyse, monitor, and control potential risks that could affect the execution of the project. Risk management is a continuous process that will be undertaken throughout the lifetime of the project.

Risks will be minimized and managed by using well-established methodologies for project planning and project control. The splitting of project work into work packages also minimizes internal risks. The Project Coordinator and the Hub Coordinator in cooperation with the Executive Board will be mainly responsible to handle risks and inform all partners when necessary.



3.2. Methodology

Risk Management Framework

The risk management strategy includes:

- Identification of potential risks across work packages.
- Assessment of risk likelihood and impact.
- Mitigation actions and contingency planning.
- Monitoring responsibilities and escalation procedures.

Sustainability Framework

The sustainability component is informed by:

- Engagement with stakeholders across the quadruple helix.
- Development of a **sustainability roadmap** (linked to deliverable D5.8).
- Integration of gender, social inclusion, and green/digital transition goals.
- Legacy mechanisms, including the **one-stop-shop support concept**.

3.3. Risk Management Plan

Risks will be identified and analysed throughout the project based on the risk life cycle processes consisting of risk identification, risk analysis, risk evaluation, risk mitigation and risk tracking. Each partner is responsible to communicate to the PC any potential risks.

Each identified risk will be evaluated based on the Risk Assessment Matrix against its impact and likelihood. The Risk Assessment Matrix is an easily comprehensible way of visualizing the potential risks.

Table 4 Risk level of Likelihood

Level	Likelihood	Probability	Impact
1	Not Likely	~ 10%	Negligible
2	Low Likelihood	~30%	Minor
3	Likely	~50%	Moderate
4	Highly Likely	~70%	Significant
5	Near Certain	~90%	Severe

Depending on the severity of each risk, different mitigation measures will be taken. The level of likelihood will be defined based on Table 4.

The definition of the risk level is calculated based on the relation between Probability/Likelihood and Impact with the "Impact value" weighting more than the "Likelihood value". The risk levels are explained in Table 5.



Table 5 Definition of risk levels

Risk level	Definition
LOW	Has little potential to cause disruption of schedule, increase in cost, or disruption of performance. Normal effort will probably be able to overcome difficulties
MODERATE	Can potentially cause some disruption of schedule, increase in cost, or disruption of performance. However, special effort will probably be able to overcome difficulties.
HIGH	Likely to cause significant serious disruption of schedule, increase in cost, or degradation of performance even with special effort and close monitoring of the contracting activity.

3.4. Identified Risks

As defined in Annex I of the GA, several risks and risk-mitigation measures have been already defined at the submission of the proposal (Table 6).

Table 6 Critical risks & risk management strategy

Critical risks & risk management strategy			
No.	Description	WP No(s)	Proposed Mitigation Measures
1	Impossibility of in-presence training events due to force majeure (low)	WP2, WP4, WP1	Creation of an interactive concept, and escalation plan for the digital / hybrid implementation of the events
2	Inability to close capability gaps in consortium members' innovation management capabilities (low)	WP2, WP1	Benchmark and map consortium members' innovation management capabilities; Develop regionally individualized novel training formats to close capability gaps; Foster networking and staff exchange schemes among consortium members

Critical risks & risk management strategy			
No.	Description	WP No(s)	Proposed Mitigation Measures
3	Low demand / interest / participation from SMEs in less developed regions (low)	WP2, WP4	Ensure clear communication of project benefits and objectives to SMEs, including via a specialised marketing agency; Engaging in proactive SME matchmaking activities; Providing targeted training series and one-on-one investment support
4	Short-term cancellation by training SMEs in less developed regions (low)	WP2, WP4	Clear communication of the cancellation policy; Up-front commitment from relevant (high level) position of participating SME
5	Inadequate support for SMEs in identifying and implementing innovation investment projects (low)	WP3	Although project measures for SMEs might not be sufficient to overcome barriers faced by; SMEs in every region, project will focus on addressing region-specific challenges, by: Training consortium members to provide regional SMEs with support in identifying and implementing innovation investment projects; Providing one-on-one innovation investment support for individual projects; Integrating this in a pilot approach for localization support for SMEs
6	Financial risk (low)	WP5	Monthly financial budget monitoring; Timely update of EASME project officer on unforeseen expenses and potential budget shifts within the work packages

Critical risks & risk management strategy			
No.	Description	WP No(s)	Proposed Mitigation Measures
7	Lack of sustainability and pipeline delivery after the project ends. (high)	WP5	The project's success in achieving impact goals and creating a sustainable innovation funnel beyond the project's duration is uncertain and dependent on factors outside the project's control, such as changing market conditions and government policies. For this reason, the risk is classified as high and will be mitigated by: Involving governmental agencies responsible for S3 and grant allocation early in the process, in WP2&- Establish the one-stop-shop localization support concept in WP3; Developing a sustainability roadmap, aimed at the long-term development of the respective region; Continuation of the matchmaking events for SMEs combined with the dissemination of best practices

3.5. Sustainability Strategy

Project-Level Sustainability

- A one-stop-shop support model is piloted and scaled to regional stakeholders (D5.7).
- Adoption of impact focused KPIs and monitoring tools.
- Engagement of S3 authorities and policymakers through the Advisory Board (D5.6).

Regional & Interregional Sustainability

- Institutional anchoring via regional development agencies and clusters.
- Development of a **sustainability roadmap** with:
 - Long-term goals
 - Resource commitments
 - Milestones & KPIs
 - Governance frameworks

Knowledge Transfer & Replicability

- Documentation and dissemination of best practices.
- Design of training programs for long-term reuse.
- Creation of scalable frameworks for ecosystem building and SME support.



3.6. Sustainability and continuation

The follow-up of the project after the EU funding ends is critical for ensuring that its impact is sustained, and the objectives achieved. To ensure this, several activities will need to be done, and specific parts of the project will need to be continued or maintained.

Firstly, the interregional ecosystem that will be established during the project should be maintained and strengthened. This will ensure that the collaboration and partnerships that have been created will continue to be fruitful, and there will be a sustained funnel of SME applications for future I3 strands. The project's multiplier-approach and EDIH networking leverage should also be sustained, ensuring that the knowledge created during the project is disseminated to a wider audience.

To achieve this, the consortium members should continue to work together beyond the project's duration, and regular meetings and events should be organized to maintain and strengthen the established relationships. The resources necessary to continue the project should come from the consortium members' own resources, and the EDIHs network. As a first approach, 2 meeting series are foreseen to be introduced after the end of the second year:

- Consortium group meeting (1 per quarter): Selected individuals from the consortium partners convene for a virtual meeting. The meeting comprises two main sections. At first, each region provides a brief overview of new developments, best practices, etc., to ensure ongoing knowledge exchange. In the second part of the meeting, cross-regional collaboration potentials and existing initiatives are discussed.
- EDIH focus group (1 per month): Regular exchange among individuals responsible for disseminating the project through the EDIH network in their respective regions. Progress is discussed collectively, leading to the derivation of individual action plans.

Secondly, the training and capacity building activities undertaken during the project should also be continued beyond the project's duration. This will ensure that the SMEs continue to benefit from the project's outcomes and that their innovative capacities are sustained and improved. The training series and virtual peer learning events should continue to be organized, and the train-the-trainer approach should also be continued to ensure that the capacities developed during the project are sustained. This is made possible by IMP³ROVE providing core content and tools on a long-term basis:

- SME Training (T2.3): Follow-Up material and recordings will be freely available for any interested party.



- Mapping of innovation capabilities (T1.2): IMP³ROVEs innovation platform and its assessments remain accessible free of charge.

Thirdly, the pilot approach for localization support for SMEs developed during the project should also be sustained. This includes the one-stop-shop facility and the best practice & transfer manual developed by Romanian EDIH & TTO. The sustainability of the approach should be ensured by continuing to use the approach to support SMEs and continuously updating the manual as new best practices and knowledge are developed. SustainX will also create the prerequisites for a sustainable continuation of the model in other regions, ensuring optimal long-term support for the innovation ecosystem.

As described in T5.4, the scaling process of the one-stop-shop for supporting SMEs in the selected regions will be implemented through various measures: Identification of potential partner associations and clusters for the expansion of the one-stop-shop support system, Development of a roadmap for scaling up the one-stop-shop support system, Implementing the scaling process in selected regions, Monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the scaling process. Following the end of the project, the consortium partners will continue the process according to the developed sustainability roadmaps.

Fourthly, the interregional collaboration initiatives established during the project should also be sustained. This will ensure that complementarities identified among SMEs are fully exploited, and there is continued cross-regional collaboration for shared innovation.

Matchmaking events for SMEs (T4.2): Could be maintained and be conducted as online B2B matchmaking events, organized in collaboration with EEN national contact points. Furthermore, the project's impact should be monitored and evaluated continuously to ensure that the project's objectives are sustained. This can be achieved using appropriate indicators, such as the number of interregional collaborations initiated, the number of SMEs supported, the number of new jobs created, and the amount of investment generated.

Lastly, there are several possible synergies/complementarities with other (EU funded) activities that can build on the project results. The call text mentions that the project should complement support to the capacity building of less developed regions to enable interregional ecosystems to deliver concrete interregional innovation investments along the S3 priorities within the framework of the EU value chains, as well as the capacity to participate in partnerships with other regions. This means that the project can build on existing initiatives and projects in the same areas to achieve greater impact.

For example, the project can collaborate with other initiatives funded under the same call, such as Strand 2a, to promote interregional innovation investments and develop shared value chains. The project can also collaborate with other EU-funded initiatives that focus on similar areas, such as the Digital Innovation Hubs, to strengthen the capacities of SMEs and promote digital transformation.

Overall, sustaining the project's impact will require the continued collaboration and partnership among the consortium members, the maintenance of the training and capacity building activities, the continued use of the pilot approach for localization support for SMEs, the continued interregional collaboration initiatives, and continuous monitoring and evaluation of the project's outcomes. There are also possible synergies/complementarities with other EU-funded initiatives that can build on the project results to achieve greater impact.

The project partners have already agreed that they will preserve the project's website and social media accounts for at least another 3 years, after the project's closure.

Furthermore, SustainX could even evolve into legal entities in form of separate one-stop-shops in each of the respective regions and become self-financing. Potential sources of income for the one-stop-shops include: Services for SMEs, such as mentoring and consulting, ESG for sustainable digital innovation training and consulting, Services for organizations supporting businesses, Participation in funded projects and initiatives, Monetary or in-kind donations, including through crowdsourcing.

Each consortium partner would act as an independent owner of their respective one-stop shop, while knowledge exchange and cross-regional initiatives would continue to be driven through the existing quadruple-helix-ecosystem.

During the second year, a sustainability strategy will be developed to provide the consortium partners with a clear roadmap for the upcoming years (T5.6). This strategy will be built upon the previously outlined approaches and the practical insights gained throughout the project.

3.7. Contribution to Impact and Ambition

The deliverable directly contributes to the ambition of SustainX:

- Strengthens the ability of ecosystems in less developed regions to absorb innovation investments.
- Supports green and digital transformation through sustainable models.





- Enables long-term resilience of SME support structures and cross-border cooperation.

It reinforces the project’s alignment with EU goals on regional cohesion, deep tech innovation, and sustainable industrial transition.

SustainX develops an approach that has multiple short and long-term effects on the development of the innovation potential throughout partners’ regions. Its geographical scope, the objectives and specific activities are designed in a way to reach out various target groups of beneficiaries along the quadruple-helix ecosystem, spreading good practices, models and development instruments to unlock opportunities for knowledge and technology transfer beyond regions and adding value along the national and European value chains.

Table 7 Target groups - Description and benefits of the target groups

Target group	Description
Enterprises	<p>These include SMEs, start-ups, scale-ups and mid-caps as the core target group. The core target group are SMEs with high innovative and growth potential that have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * potential to grow on the regional, national and European Single Market (SM); * capacity to develop innovations and are technology adaptors; * prospects for digital, green and deep tech transformation; * ambition to integrate sustainability as a core horizontal principle, toward elaborating on sustainable and resilient business models, management processes and innovation strategy. <p>Benefits: direct beneficiaries of the project’s services and trainings to be provided; better understanding of the innovation management process toward I3 instrument and application of S3; special needs assessment and capacity building; better networking opportunities; potentially part of initiated investment pitches</p>



Target group	Description
Industry	<p>Big industrial enterprises, though not belonging to the core target group of SMEs, these players possess opportunities for shaping the innovative environment by providing opportunities for growth, business clustering and developing state-of-art technologies for the uptake of the technological trends of Industry 4.0 and Industry 5.0.</p> <p>Benefits: direct beneficiaries of project’s services and trainings to be provided; opportunity for R&D and innovation activities; testing of new business models and innovative solutions; creation of value chain partnerships with a focus on knowledge and technology transfer</p>
Research infrastructures	<p>Crucial players in the innovation process often with a high untapped potential for commercializing their R&D results and transforming them into innovation, e.g., IPR protected patents, utility models, etc.</p> <p>Development of spin-offs are likewise a desired state of the enhanced investment landscape as a result of the project.</p> <p>Benefits: direct beneficiaries of project’s services and trainings; potential for capacity building and development of innovative ideas into go-to-market innovative solutions matched with investment opportunities; new and strengthen partnerships between innovative companies and research organizations.</p>
Regional authorities /Public administration and managing authorities	<p>These state institutions play an important role by shaping the governance policy mix and providing a strategy guidance and governance instruments. The development and the promotion of innovation environment should combine a holistic top-down approach with a bottom-up approach. This target group involves decision-makers that deal with SMEs, innovation and R&D commercialization, the Green Deal, the Recovery and Resilience Plans, etc.</p> <p>Benefits: direct beneficiaries of project’s services and outcomes; better understanding of the investment environment and business needs; strengthening cooperation between government and business toward managing projects and attracting investments; developing new strategic local/regional partnerships; improving strategic documents based on practical experience gained.</p>



Target group	Description
Innovation intermediaries	Organizations of different types that interact and support the development of SMEs and the innovation environment. These can be regional development agencies, industrial associations, alliances, clusters, private sector organizations, incubators and initiatives for acceleration belonging to the regional innovation ecosystem to engage the ecosystems in interregional investments. Moreover, working with intermediaries as consortium partners/members results in maximum outreach and impact. Benefits: Involving a wide range of stakeholders will support bottom-up value creation process aligned with specific regional business needs integrated in the S3 and regional action plans and innovation agendas.
Civil society	Innovations are aimed at solving specific problems, in the light of I3 it is sought to improve the possibilities for the implementation of S3 by addressing social challenges and achieving sustainability. These are priorities that affect the general public as a beneficiary with an impact on the socio-economic development of the whole regions. Benefits: Promoting partners' regions as reliable investment and innovation destinations, attracting public, private and foreign capital and improving the standard of living of citizens, including reducing unemployment whilst enriching the professional qualifications of human resources are among civil society indirect benefits.

3.7.1 The impacts of the project

The impacts of the project can be thematically broken down into several groups considering the impact envisaged. In general, the effects of the project are directly related to the specific objectives of the current open call (I3 impacts) contributing to a better understanding and implementation of the objectives of the S3 in partners regions (S3 impacts). The four main outcomes of the project include increased knowledge and capacity for regional innovation ecosystems, the enhancement of collaboration among stakeholders, the increase in participation in EU value chains, and the improvement of governance structures for regional innovation ecosystems.



3.7.2 Direct impacts and effects at the end of the project

A. Short-term results

1 – Creation of new linkages and business opportunities between quadruple-helix system actors

Project SustainX's unique selling points include robust capacity building approach enriched by regions' special (specific) needs assessment and 'individualization' of services provided, S3 strategy compliance, EDIH networking leverage, EDIH technical expertise leverage and multiplier-approach by the intermediaries. This will enrol multilevel stakeholders in a co-design process whilst deepening their mutual interactions one step forward. The 'individualization' perspective conveys an additional selling proposition to the pre-setting of services and increases their added value as the lack of individualization could be currently reported as a weakness in the link between regional strategic action plans and real business needs.

- The project's partners are representatives of different stakeholder groups (science, business, intermediaries) of the innovation ecosystem, which would have a positive impact on strengthening the cross-sectoral and cross-disciplinary links; to extend the dialogue and convergence of regions; to distribute the created knowledge for capacity building for maximum impact generation.
- The partners in the consortium are members of national networks with a membership base and/or themselves have an extensive membership base and contacts of national importance. In this respect, the good results and practices of the project will be disseminated beyond the regional infrastructures (e.g., through EENs, EDIH, etc.)
- Benchmarked and mapped innovation management capabilities to assess local strengths and capability gaps regarding their impact within regional ecosystems and on regional and EU value chains. In addition to this, identification of special needs of the regions is about to complement the understanding of regional business and economic outlook in the context of S3.

Intensity (low/medium/high): High Related to: 13 impacts, S3 impacts, skills development and capacity building, transformative and sustainability impacts, territorial impacts, diffusion of innovation.

2 – Identification of concrete investment opportunities, developing a portfolio of projects



Including in terms of developing policy mix of available funding opportunities (mapping) toward attracting private capital. This is assessed as an extremely important outcome with a long-term impact aimed at providing solutions to one of the most challenging topics related to fund-raising issues and attracting investment capital. Among the project's KPIs is the preparation of 8 investment pitches. Their successful implementation could be seen as a multiplier effect beyond the project's completion with a view to implementing these projects in the future.

- Capacity building for assessment and management of investment projects by Quadruple-helix system (including by offering own assessment platform) and support to scale-up companies breakthrough innovations.

Intensity (low/medium/high): High Related to: I3 impacts (green transition, digital transition, smart manufacturing; creation of I3 applications (Strand 1 & Strand 2a)), skills development and capacity building, diffusion of innovation, good new practices, use cases.

3 - More advanced and coherent services offered by the consortium/partners

The overall capacity building will uptake the services offered by partners to SMEs in terms of scaling up their perspectives on innovation management, internationalization, access to finance, adapting new technologies and sustainable development.

Intensity (low/medium/high): High Related to: I3 Impacts, skills development and capacity building, transformative and sustainability impacts, test new approaches.

4 - Better synergy between different regional networks, developing skills and support to startup communities

Increasing competencies in areas identified as needed for business (e.g. developing STEM skills. According to the New European Innovation Agenda deep tech startups and innovation companies need access to a strong supply of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and entrepreneurial skills). The project will provide robust peer-to-peer learning along with train the trainer initiatives.

Intensity (low/medium/high): High Related to: I3 impacts (e.g. creation of I3 applications (Strand 1 & Strand 2a)), capacity building of STEM skills and supporting entrepreneurship, technology transfer, territorial impacts.



5 - Contribution to completing the objectives set out in the New European Innovation Agenda

Stimulating the twin digital and green transition and creation of deep tech innovations, which is rooted in cutting edge science, technology, and engineering with the potential to deliver transformative solutions considering the global challenges.

Intensity (low/medium/high): High Related to: I3 impacts, S3 impacts, technology transfer, transformative and sustainability impacts, test new approaches, good new practices, use cases.

B. Long-term impacts (indirect effects)

1 - Reinforced regional ecosystem sustainability and continuous pipeline delivery after the end of the project

The established partnerships and culture of mutual trust and common understanding of the innovation opportunities within and between regions should be continuously fostered toward achieving post project's results sustainability. This will create new and strengthened local interregional ecosystems with traditions to generate innovations and attract investors.

Intensity (low/medium/high): Medium Related to: S3 impacts, networking, establishing innovation culture and entrepreneurship spirit, transformative and sustainability impacts, social impacts, territorial impacts, diffusion of innovation.

2 - Better understanding of the regional innovation systems by decisionmakers

Involving decision-makers could lead to enriching the policy mix of tools not only for developing investment projects, but also expanding opportunities related to the implementation and development of S3.

Intensity (low/medium/high): Low/Medium Related to: S3, policy mix improvement, opportunities for financing, skills development and capacity building, transformative and sustainability impacts, social impacts, territorial impacts, new good practices, use cases.

3 - Convergence of regions and developing a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship among society

This way contributing to the integration of common European values related to the digital, green, and technological development of the business community and civil society. Developing an innovation and entrepreneurial culture along mechanisms allowing experimentation and testing of new approaches in the priority areas will reflect in strengthen and highly competitive markets.

Intensity (low/medium/high): Low/Medium Related to: 13 impacts, interregional cooperation, transfer of technology, strengthen EU value chains, innovation culture development, support to start-up ecosystem, transformative and sustainability impacts, social impacts, territorial impacts, economic transformation, test new approaches, diffusion of innovation.

4 - Stimulation of the regional economies progress

Fostering the regional competitive advantages and creating partnerships beyond the thematic areas of the project, linked to the development of interregional and international cooperation. This will lead to raised standard of living and exploitation of untapped innovation potential.

Promotion of new market opportunities accelerated competitiveness and growth of local companies. Indirectly involving citizens and educating the public in the values of sustainable digital, green, and smart manufacturing development. Promoting the results of the achievements and developing the tools and opportunities to unlock the innovation potential of regions with a direct impact on the local and regional economy.

Intensity (low/medium/high): Low/Medium Related to: S3 impacts, local, interregional, and international cooperation, transformative and sustainability impacts, social impacts, territorial impacts, economic transformation.

5 - Promotion of less developed and outermost regions on the European innovation map

These are mainly outermost and less developed regions. This promotion will contribute to an uptake of their overall attractiveness about doing business and foreign capital raising opportunities.

Intensity (low/medium/high): Medium Related to: S3 impacts, strengthen EU value chains, access to finance, networking, social impacts, technology transfer, territorial impacts, new good practices, use cases.

The following impacts are categorized into short-, medium-, and long-term effects. They are not always distinctly separable but often build upon one another. Accordingly, the description of long-term impacts also includes the short-term measures that create the foundation for sustainable change.

A. Short-term impacts

1. Increased innovation capacity through policy measures

The new policy measures to be introduced during the project can primarily be divided into two levels. Firstly, a policy mix of available funding opportunities (mapping) will be developed to attract private capital. Because financing is a central challenge for innovation projects, this is as an extremely important outcome with lasting impact. Secondly, policy measures will be developed to enhance external engagement of the ecosystems (e.g., open innovation platform, digital skills development programs). The measures will be developed, tested, and adopted during the project, ultimately equipping the regions to better engage in interregional innovation projects. This, in turn, will lead to an increase in competitiveness and economic growth.

2. Improved business climate

A central objective of SustainX is to foster regional and cross-regional collaboration among quadruple-helix actors. This involves proactively identifying and initiating collaboration opportunities aligned with shared S3 priorities. Strengthening the ecosystem leads to the establishment of corresponding supporting sectors. As a result, the regions become more appealing to investors, driving economic growth.

3. Updated action plans

At the project's outset, the regions of consortium partners are thoroughly analysed, and region-specific challenges are identified. Together with the S3 priorities, this provides a comprehensive overview of regional strengths and weaknesses, forming the basis for revising and aligning action plans more closely with real business needs.

This realignment places a distinct emphasis on regional potentials along EU value chains, enhancing the innovation capacity and competitiveness of the regions. The resulting focus also directly impacts the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.



4. Development of innovation infrastructure

In this context, the innovation infrastructure comprises the areas for innovation diffusion, policy measures for investment, open markets, and value chain participation. The goal is to create an environment that facilitates the development of innovations. The presented shared S3 Priorities (Digital Transformation and Sustainable Innovation) provide clear focal points, while a policy mix of available funding opportunities (mapping) is intended to facilitate access to private capital. Building upon the shared S3 Priorities, innovations are advanced along the EU value chains.

5. Integration of innovation support intermediaries

Project SustainX's unique selling points include a robust capacity building approach enriched by regions' specific needs assessment and 'individualization' of services provided, S3 strategy compliance, EDIH networking leverage, the utilization of EDIH networking and technical expertise as well as a multiplier-approach facilitated using intermediaries. Thereby, engaging stakeholders at various levels in a collaborative design process while fostering deeper mutual interactions.

The project's partners represent diverse stakeholder groups (academia, business, intermediaries) within the innovation ecosystem, thereby positively impacting the reinforcement of cross-sectoral and cross-disciplinary connections. This approach aims to expand dialogue and convergence among regions and to disseminate generated knowledge for capacity building to maximize SustainX impact.

B. Mid-term impacts

1. Identification of ecosystems with European market potential

The foundation is based on aligning the regions according to their specific strengths through shared S3 priorities, as well as the associated action plans. Building upon this, ecosystems with European market potential are identified, and strategies are adjusted to ensure the regions' long-term economic growth.

SustainX promotes both regional and interregional collaborations aligned with the developed strategies, connecting innovation infrastructure with the respective industrial clusters.



1. Matching supply-side competencies with demand-driven business opportunities

Building upon the identified potential, tools for mapping supply-side competencies and aligning them with demand-driven business opportunities provide an overview of the economic potential within each respective region. This includes mapping the regional investment ecosystem, ranging from pre-accelerators to venture capitalists (VCs), through activities like consortium group workshops.

In the medium term, this approach aims to address region-specific challenges and effectively leverage strengths.

3. Identification of I3 Instrument related value chains & investment pipelines

Based on the mapping and benchmarking activities, I3 Instrument-related value chains and investment pipelines are identified. Collectively, they provide a preliminary roadmap for the region's involvement in EU value chains.

Consequently, the project will strive to enhance the region's strengths that have been cultivated through SustainX and outlined by the regional S3 Priorities.

4. Identification of competitive regional products and services

Following the initially defined roadmaps, specific competitive products, and services unique to each respective region are to be identified. By analyzing and building up resources and capabilities, regions can achieve competitive advantages along interregional and European level value chains. This strategic focus on sectors and niches can enhance regions' appeal to potential partners and investors, thereby enabling the creation of new business opportunities.

5. Enhancing companies' capabilities to engage in I3 Instrument projects and interregional innovation projects

SustainX aims to strengthen regional innovation ecosystems, promote interregional partnerships, and thereby create the conditions needed to apply for funding under the I3 Instrument (Strands 1 and 2a) or other relevant EU funding schemes.

During the project, diverse actors of the quadruple-helix (academia, industry, government, and civil society) are linked through matchmaking and networking events (on-site & virtual), fostering regional and cross-regional collaboration.



Additionally, SustainX enhances the innovation capacity of the respective regions through targeted training series and knowledge exchange within the ecosystem. This encompasses training on EU regulations and standards, market research, intellectual property rights, investor approach, design thinking, internationalization strategies as well as study visits and exchange programs.

Ultimately, the goal is to stimulate innovations and catalyse a long-term cultural transformation within the regions by integrating various perspectives and approaches, including visiting partners from more advanced regions. In addition, best practices are disseminated within the ecosystem, involving activities like peer-to-peer workshops and investment pitches, to facilitate sustainable development and economic growth.

6. Development of business cases for the I3 Instrument

By strengthening regional ecosystems and linking suitable partners, the foundation is laid for proposals that meet the requirements of I3 Strands 1 and 2a. Building on this, the project will provide selected stakeholders with 1-on-1 guidance from experts within the consortium to assist them in forming business cases and the resulting pitches.

This support aims to assist them in developing viable, market-ready, and financially sustainable innovation investment projects while securing the necessary funding.

7. Preparation and dissemination of best practices

To ensure that the project has a sustainable impact on the target regions, it is necessary to cultivate ecosystems capable of driving innovation independently. Thus, providing stakeholders with the appropriate resources and tools, such as best practices and showcase projects, becomes crucial to achieving long-term effects. For this reason, the consortium is creating a best practice and transfer manual intended to serve as a blueprint for future projects. This includes investment pitches, particularly focused on innovation financing, as well as other projects and approaches presented and further developed in peer-to-peer workshops.

Leveraging the consortium's network, these templates and examples are made available to regional ecosystems both during and after the project. This empowers the regions to continuously and independently foster innovation.



C. Long-term impacts

1. Reinforced capacity of quadruple-helix innovation ecosystem actors

SustainX enhances the innovation capacity of target regions and fosters interregional collaboration along EU value chains, thereby promoting the competitiveness of local SMEs and driving economic growth in less developed regions.

- Initiation of interregional collaborations: Expressed through Letters of Intent (LoI) from a minimum of 10 partners, facilitated by SME matchmaking and dialogue promotion (e.g., Touchdown event).
- Targeted capacity building for consortium partners and SMEs: Innovation management and investment efforts guided by benchmarking, S3 priorities, and region-specific challenges.
- Emphasis on shared S3 priorities: Both the overarching clusters "Digital Transformation" and "Sustainable Innovation," as well as individual S3 priorities, serve as guiding principles for the capacity-building training series.

2. Improved connection of innovation infrastructure

Within the project, stakeholders from academia, industry, government, and civil society are brought together to form a quadruple-helix ecosystem. The connections and capacities established within this ecosystem lay the groundwork for more efficient and effective resource utilization and improved innovation outcomes.

- Consortium learning journey: This involves connecting consortium members with partners from more developed regions to exchange insights and perspectives on innovation practices, including visits to innovation labs, DIHs, EDIHs, and SMEs.
- SME partner matchmaking: The project focuses on identifying potential partners with thematic alignment and facilitating introductions among them.
- Touchdown event: By bringing together various SMEs from the consortium's partner regions, knowledge exchange is further promoted, existing partnerships are reinforced, and new contacts are established.

3. Implemented support measures for innovation diffusion, investment identification and value chain participation



To promote and disseminate innovation, it's essential to create a suitable business environment in the targeted regions that can attract more investment, generate new business opportunities, and establish a pipeline of cross-regional innovation projects. Accordingly, SustainX will collaborate with governing bodies to introduce various policies and measures.

- Developing a policy mix of available financing options (mapping) to attract private capital.
- Involving intermediary networks like EEN and EDIHs to disseminate the project's successful results and practices beyond regional boundaries and expand the ecosystem through a multiplier approach.
- Assisting consortium partners in enabling regional participation in European platforms to strengthen interregional collaboration (e.g., S3 Thematic Platforms, European Technology Platforms, EU Cluster Collaboration Platform).
- Establishing one or more new platforms with a focus on shared S3 priorities to enable interregional knowledge exchange (e.g., open innovation platform, digital skills development programs).

4. Increased maturity of I3 Instrument projects consortia

SustainX aims to build capacities for a successful participation in I3 Strands 1 and 2a. Accordingly, the foundations must be laid in the quadruple-helix ecosystem to ensure that innovation projects continue to be driven forward even after the end of SustainX and the associated departure of IMP³ROVE.

- Building and strengthening interregional relationships and cooperation (e.g., matchmaking, touchdown event).
- Assessment of local strengths and capability gaps regarding their impact within regional ecosystems and on regional and EU value chains (e.g., benchmarking, mapping).
- Capacity building regarding assessment and management of innovation investment projects through training series.
- 1-on-1 guidance from experts within the consortium to assist selected stakeholders of the quadruple-helix ecosystem develop feasible, market-ready, and bankable innovation investment projects.
- Supporting 8 investment pitches, which serve as a blueprint for participation in I3 Strands 1 and 2a and whose successful implementation can create a multiplier effect.

5. Implementation of S3 based roadmaps



Within the project, the implementation of S3-based roadmaps will play a crucial role in strengthening the strategic direction of each respective region. These roadmaps, aligned with the European Strategic Innovation agendas, will outline a comprehensive path for advancing the region's innovation efforts. The inclusion of implementation timelines for specific actions and upcoming steps will lead to sustained and impactful long-term outcomes. This integrated approach will enhance the region's innovation ecosystem, positioning it for continuous growth and competitiveness within the European landscape.

- Focus on the shared S3 Priorities (Digital Transformation and Sustainable Innovation).
- Identification of value chains and interregional investment projects based on mapping and benchmarking activities.
- Implementing and using an ESG impact assessment digital tool to further guide innovation projects towards sustainable digital innovation.

The SustainX project seeks to trigger change on various levels within the less developed regions of the consortium partners. Through capacity building and the establishment of regional and interregional relationships, new approaches are unveiled, and local innovation ecosystems are reshaped. Key components in this context include the various training series, investment project piloting, as well as the engagement of different stakeholders within the quadruple-helix framework, each contributing their unique perspectives, experiences, and best practices.

The project's overarching goal is to trigger a long-term paradigm shift in how the targeted regions collaborate within EU value chains to profoundly strengthen both the EU value chains and the economies of the respective less developed regions. By taking this approach, SustainX lays the foundation for a sustainable pipeline of innovation projects aligned with the requirements of I3 Strands 1 and 2a.

Through the involvement of various intermediaries such as EEN and EDIHs, the gained experiences and proven practices are disseminated to other less developed regions, aiming to transform their innovation ecosystems as well. This approach significantly expands the ecosystem, both in terms of geographical reach and financing opportunities, ultimately fostering sustainable economic growth in the less developed regions.

3.7.3 Environmental, territorial, and social impact

The activities and project budget have been structured in a result-oriented way that seeks efficiency of resources and achievement of impact on stakeholders.



Although the project has no direct territorial and environmental impacts in terms of production and/or material products development activities, it recognises the importance of sustainability and where relevant applies the principles of resource efficiency and sustainable project management.

Furthermore, "Digital Transformation" and "Sustainable Innovation" have been chosen as two focal points, both of which create cross-sectoral foundations to address societal challenges, minimize adverse environmental impacts, and enhance resource efficiency. Especially through its focus on the regional S3 priorities of the Sustainable Innovation Cluster, SustainX exerts a strong influence on the target regions. Noteworthy aspects in this regard are:

Environmental impacts:

- Encouragement of eco-innovations that address environmental challenges while promoting economic growth.
- Promotion of clean technologies and green innovations, which can lead to lower carbon emissions and improved air and water quality.
- Increased focus on resource-efficient production methods and circular economy principles, contributing to reduced waste and resource consumption.
- Adoption of sustainable and environmentally friendly practices among innovation ecosystem actors, contributing to reduced ecological footprint.

Territorial impacts:

- Reduction of regional disparities as less developed regions benefit from capacity building, leading to more balanced regional development.
- Improved competitiveness of regions by fostering innovation-driven economic growth
- Enhanced attractiveness of regions for investors, businesses, and talent due to an improved innovation ecosystem
- Reinforcement of regional innovation ecosystems, leading to sustained growth of innovation-driven businesses and start-ups.

Social impacts:

- Enhanced skills and knowledge among regional actors, leading to improved innovation management practices, entrepreneurship, and job creation.
- Greater participation of underrepresented groups, such as women and minorities, in the innovation ecosystem, promoting diversity and social equality

- Strengthened networks and collaborations among stakeholders, fostering cross-sectoral partnerships and knowledge exchange.

Increased engagement of local communities in sustainable innovation initiatives, contributing to social cohesion and community development.

A key instrument for SDG impact creation is a digital tool to be used by DIZ to assess ESG impact for the SMEs and guiding them towards sustainable innovation. The ecological, territorial, and social impact of SustainX aims for long-term effects and is influenced by various external factors, making it challenge to be directly controlled. The following list of impact KPIs is intended primarily for measuring project progress in these areas rather than for project management purposes:

Table 8 list of impact KPIs

Dimension	KPI (Long-term impact)	Target Value
Environmental	Number of eco-innovations developed – related to SustainX	≥ 6
	Carbon emission reduction associated with SustainX	≥ 1
Territorial	ROI over the next 4 Years – regarding projects related to SustainX	≥ 10%
	Number of new innovation-driven businesses and startups related to SustainX	≥ 5
Social	Number of jobs created – related to SustainX	≥ 1
	Percentage of female participation in the innovation projects supported by SustainX.	≥ 40%

Furthermore, the direct impacts of the project need to be considered to minimize SustainX's environmental footprint. Accordingly, the consortium has established various measures and practices to be adhered to by all project stakeholders:

- Sustainable event planning: For physical events, venues with good public transport connections are preferred and participants are encouraged to choose corresponding connections. In addition, the use of printed material is kept to a minimum, environmentally friendly catering options are selected, and surplus food is donated.
- Virtual Meetings and Events: Whenever feasible and appropriate, meetings with stakeholders, workshops, webinars, trainings, etc. will be conducted online, thereby promoting cost-effectiveness as well.



- Paperless project management: General communication and documents will be stored in the cloud and/or disseminated through digital channels to partners. The use of paper will be limited to the necessary minimum.

Compliance with these guidelines can be monitored through the following KPIs:

Table 9 KPI (SustainX impact)

KPI (SustainX impact)	Target Value
Percentage of regional consortium members using public transportation to reach an event (quick survey)	≥30%
Percentage of meetings, workshops, webinars, etc., conducted online compared to in-person	≥50%
Percentage of documents stored in the cloud / digital format compared to paper	≥ 95%

4. Conclusions

This deliverable reinforces SustainX's ambition to drive lasting innovation in less developed EU regions through a robust risk management strategy and forward-looking sustainability plan. By embedding risk mitigation, stakeholder engagement, and ESG principles into every work package, the project ensures resilience and adaptability. The sustainability roadmap, one-stop-shop support system, and interregional collaboration models create a solid pipeline for innovation beyond the project's lifetime. Together, these elements position SustainX as a catalyst for green, digital, and inclusive regional transformation.



SustainX



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