

The Challenge

Cross-regional cooperation often starts with a broad intention to “find partners” or “develop a project”. Without a clearly defined challenge, the right partner profile and an agreed next step, initial contacts can remain at networking level.

EDIHs and EEN nodes can help SMEs turn these early contacts into structured collaboration opportunities.



SustainX Best Practice One-Pager | August 2026

From Collaboration Idea to Pilot

The Best Practice

The SustainX collaboration approach applied in North-East Romania uses a simple five-stage pathway:

DEFINE → MATCH → SCOPE → TEST → FOLLOW-UP

The approach starts with the business or innovation need, rather than with a funding call. It then identifies the right capabilities, clarifies the conditions for cooperation and moves towards a concrete pilot, validation activity or project concept

How can EDIHs & EENs apply this approach?

1. DEFINE

Start with the need

Clarify the problem, proposed solution and expected result.

Ask: What exactly should this collaboration achieve?

2. MATCH

Identify the right capabilities

Look for the company, user, university, research organisation, laboratory or innovation intermediary that can provide the missing expertise.

Ask: Who is actually needed to move the idea forward?

3. SCOPE

Set the conditions for cooperation

Clarify roles, technical requirements, resources, data, intellectual property, timing and costs.

Ask: What needs to be agreed before collaboration can begin?

4. TEST

Move towards a concrete action

Translate the collaboration into a pilot, technology validation, demonstrator or focused project concept.

Ask: What can the partners test or develop together?

5. FOLLOW-UP

Keep the collaboration moving

Assign responsibility, agree on one concrete next action and review progress within 30 days.

Ask: Who does what, and by when?

Why this is useful for EDIHs & EEN Networks

- ✓ Provides a simple pathway from initial contact to concrete cooperation.
- ✓ Helps EDIHs and EENs make partner matching more targeted.
- ✓ Connects technology support with business and market needs.
- ✓ Creates a clearer route towards pilots, validation and joint projects.
- ✓ Encourages structured follow-up instead of one-off networking.



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