The Challenge

Many SMEs have promising innovation ideas but lack a clear understanding of their investment readiness. Gaps in digital maturity, sustainability, business planning and financial preparation can limit their ability to access funding and develop innovation projects.
EDIHs and EEN nodes can help SMEs identify these gaps and access targeted support.



SustainX Best Practice One-Pager | September 2026

From SME Assessment to Investment Readiness

The Best Practice

TThe SustainX approach combines SME readiness assessment, capacity building and tailored advisory support to help businesses prepare for investment and interregional cooperation.
Through its Pre-Assessment Tool, SMEs can evaluate five key dimensions of readiness:

INNOVATION → SUSTAINABILITY → DIGITALISATION → MARKET → INVESTMENT

This approach helps identify development needs and connect SMEs with relevant training, expert guidance and potential funding pathways.

How can EDIHs & EENs apply this approach?

1. ASSESS
Evaluate SME readiness
Assess innovation strategy, digital maturity, sustainability, market potential and investment preparedness.
Ask: Where does the SME currently stand?

2. IDENTIFY
Spot the critical gaps
Use assessment findings to identify weaknesses in technology, skills, business models or financial planning.
Ask: What is preventing the SME from moving forward?

3. SUPPORT
Provide targeted assistance
Connect SMEs with relevant training, mentoring, technical expertise and innovation support services.
Ask: What support will make the greatest difference?

4. PLAN
Build an investment roadmap
Help SMEs define development priorities, required resources, expected outcomes and realistic milestones.
Ask: What steps are needed to become investment-ready?

5. CONNECT
Explore funding and partnerships
Guide SMEs towards suitable funding instruments, investors, innovation partners and European cooperation opportunities.
Ask: Which opportunities best match the SME's readiness and ambitions?

Why this is useful for EDIHs & EEN Networks

- ✓ Provides a structured approach to assessing SME investment readiness.
- ✓ Helps identify gaps in digital, sustainability and business capabilities.
- ✓ Enables more targeted training, advisory and innovation support.
- ✓ Connects SME needs with relevant funding and partnership opportunities.
- ✓ Supports SMEs in preparing for investment and interregional cooperation.



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