



Stimulating and Connecting the FINEST Experimentation Practices and Spaces

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D5.1

Helpdesk For Innovators

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Executive Summary

This deliverable documents the establishment and initial operation of the FINEX Helpdesk for Innovators, implemented under Work Package 5, Task 5.3 “Setting up a joint interregional helpdesk for supporting innovators” as described in the Grant Agreement (Annex 1). The Helpdesk serves as a single coordinated entry point to connect cleantech and deep tech innovators with matchmaking events, experimentation opportunities, and targeted support offered by FINEX partners.

The Helpdesk combines a publicly accessible online interface with a decentralised network of national contact points in all partner countries and an EU-level coordination point. It ensures innovators can easily find relevant contacts, understand the FINEX support pathway, and receive guidance on accessing experimentation spaces and piloting opportunities.

The service is now fully operational and integrated with WP5 outreach and WP6 piloting activities. This report outlines its scope, objectives, operational structure, and relation to other project components, and includes evidence of its launch and accessibility.

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List of Terms and Definitions

Table 1 Definitions

Abbreviation	Definition
EU	European Union
GA	Grant Agreement
IE	Innovation Ecosystem ¹
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
M	Month
SC	Steering Committee
WP	Work Package

¹https://eisma.ec.europa.eu/programmes/european-innovation-ecosystems_en#european-innovation-ecosystems

1. Introduction

The FINEX project – *Stimulating and Connecting the FINEST Experimentation Practices and Spaces* – is funded under Horizon Europe to accelerate the testing and scaling of cleantech and deep tech solutions in six partner countries: Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, and Lithuania. It connects startups, scaleups, corporates, research teams, public authorities, and investors in a coordinated innovation pipeline.

Within FINEX, Work Package 5 (WP5) focuses on attracting innovators and connecting them to experimentation opportunities. It does so through three main tasks:

- T5.1 – Attracting innovators through targeted outreach, campaigns, and partner networks.
- T5.2 – Matchmaking between innovators, testbed providers, and other stakeholders at national and EU levels.
- T5.3 – Setting up a joint interregional Helpdesk for supporting innovators, which is the subject of this deliverable.

Task 5.3 has a central operational role in the project's support model. The Helpdesk is designed to:

- Act as the main entry point for innovators interested in FINEX services.
- Route innovators to the most relevant opportunities, including national matchmaking events, EU-level pitch sessions, and targeted one-on-one support.
- Bridge between WP5 and WP6, ensuring that innovators with suitable solutions are connected to experimentation spaces and pilot opportunities.
- Provide access to the [Experimentation Resources Catalogue](#) created under WP4.
- Capture and transfer insights and trends from interactions with innovators to WP4 for the enhancement of tools, guidelines, and regulatory support.

The Helpdesk began operations in Q2 2025, coinciding with the first public information events and the launch of the FINEX Helpdesk webpage. It is delivered by EIT Digital as the lead beneficiary for T5.3, in cooperation with all country partners who act as local contact points.

This deliverable (D5.1) documents:

- The concept, scope, and functionalities of the Helpdesk.
- Its operating model and interaction with other tasks and work packages.
- The tools, channels, and contact structures used to deliver the service.
- Events and milestones achieved so far, as well as planned activities.
- The monitoring framework and risk management approach.

Through the Helpdesk, FINEX aims to reduce barriers to experimentation and scaling by making it easier for innovators to find, access, and benefit from opportunities across regions and sectors.

1.1 Scope and objectives

The scope of this deliverable is to establish and present the FINEX joint interregional helpdesk for supporting innovators, as defined in the Grant Agreement (Annex 1, WP5, Task 5.3). The Helpdesk is designed to act as a centralised yet locally accessible interface for cleantech and deep tech innovators seeking collaboration, testing, and scaling opportunities within the FINEX framework.

The main objectives are:

- To provide a single, recognisable point of contact for innovators across all partner regions and at the EU level.
- To ensure clear guidance on how to participate in national and EU-level matchmaking events, gain access to experimentation spaces, and enter the FINEX acceleration pathway.
- To coordinate information flow between national partners, innovators, and EU-level coordination, ensuring consistency in support and referrals.
- To provide access to the [Experimentation Resources Catalogue](#) created under WP4.
- To facilitate the identification and pre-selection of innovators for piloting and follow-up activities in WP6 by making the matchmaking process visible to stakeholders.

1.2 Relation to WPs, tasks and other deliverables

The Helpdesk under Task 5.3 is positioned as a central operational service in WP5 and has direct links to several other work packages and deliverables. Its role is both to receive inputs from earlier-stage outreach and awareness activities, and to provide outputs that feed into matchmaking, piloting, and capacity-building actions in other parts of the project.

Relation to WP5

Within WP5, the Helpdesk acts as the connecting element between Task 5.1 (Attracting innovators) and Task 5.2 (Matchmaking). Task 5.1 generates awareness and interest among the target groups through campaigns and partner outreach. These leads are then channeled to the Helpdesk for information, eligibility checking, and routing to the most relevant national or EU-level matchmaking events. Task 5.2 organizes the matchmaking events where innovators, testbed providers, and other stakeholders connect. The Helpdesk supports participant registration, pre-selection, and post-event follow-up, ensuring continuity in the support pathway.

Relation to WP6

The Helpdesk has a direct link to WP6, particularly Task 6.1 (Recruiting and matchmaking with

experimentation spaces). Once innovators have been pre-selected and engaged through matchmaking, the Helpdesk coordinates the handover of cases that are ready for piloting. This includes sharing relevant background information, contact details, etc.

Relation to WP4

The Helpdesk also interacts with WP4 by collecting structured feedback from innovators on barriers, needs, and opportunities. This information is passed to WP4 partners to improve the tools, knowledge resources, and stakeholder engagement approaches being developed there. This feedback loop ensures that the support tools are demand-driven and aligned with real-world innovation challenges.

Relation to other deliverables

D5.1 documents the establishment and operation of the Helpdesk as an operational service. The service will also contribute data and insights to later deliverables, such as those covering matchmaking outcomes, pilot selection, and stakeholder engagement performance.

2. FINEX HelpDesk

The HelpDesk operates as a hybrid structure combining:

- A central online interface – publicly available via the official FINEX Helpdesk webpage: <https://www.eitdigital.eu/finex-helpdesk/>
- A decentralized network of FINEX national contact points – each partner country has one or more designated representatives responsible for handling enquiries and facilitating local connections.
- EU-level coordination – EIT Digital acts as the coordinating entity for cross-regional enquiries and referrals.

Functions and services provided:

- Clear description of the FINEX project goals and the HelpDesk's purpose.
- Explanation on how innovators can enter the program (national matchmaking, EU-level matchmaking, piloting support).
- Presentation of the step-by-step piloting timeline.
- Contacts of FINEX partners enabling stakeholders to reach out for more information and next steps.
- Guidance for innovators towards events and opportunities to connect with experimentation spaces, partners, and stakeholders.
- Experimentation Resources Catalogue of collaborative spaces, business development programs, experimentation spaces, and funding opportunities across Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Finland, Cyprus, and Bulgaria.
- Dedicated Resources & FAQ section, providing stakeholders with access to project materials, guidance documents, and practical information to support their participation in FINEX activities.

2.1 HelpDesk

The FINEX HelpDesk serves the central entry point providing information and access to FINEX support services.

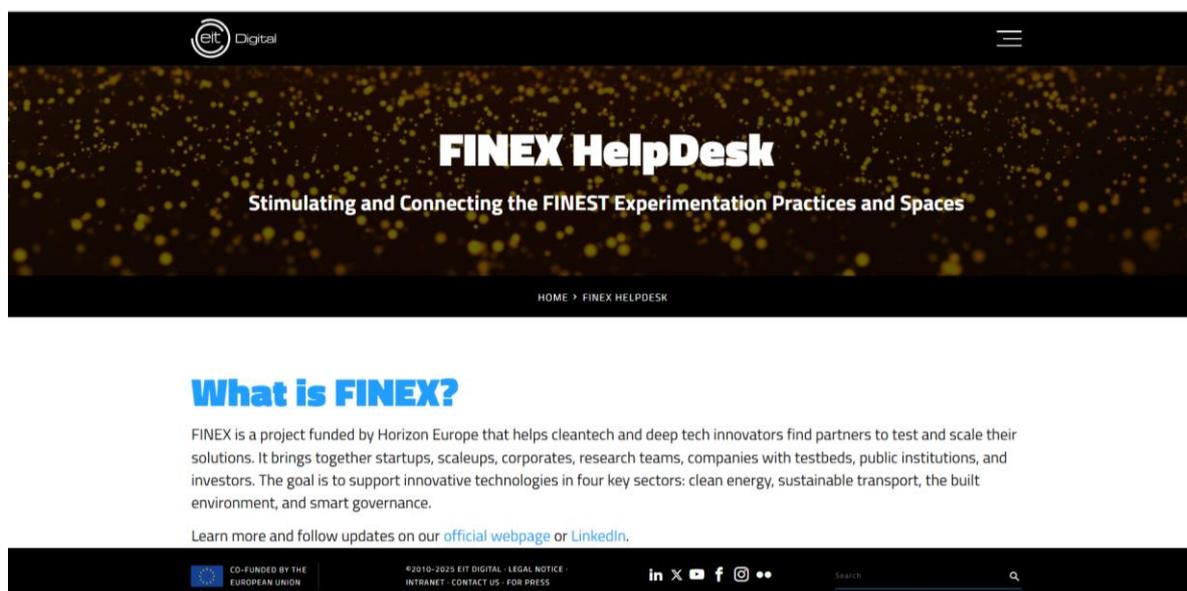


Figure 1 HelpDesk webpage

2.2 Program entry

The webpage provides guidance on how innovators and stakeholders can join the FINEX support pathway.

What Does FINEX Offer to Innovators?

We work with the following types of organisations:

- Startups: Small, fast-growing companies developing new technologies
- Scaleups: More established companies looking to expand and deploy innovations
- Corporates: Larger firms exploring cleantech deployment
- Research institutions: Universities, UAS or labs with pilot-ready solutions

What we offer:

- Matchmaking Events: Meet potential testbed providers, investors, and partners at focused national and EU-wide events
- Access to Experimentation Spaces: Get connected with real-world test environments where your solution could be piloted (e.g. energy systems, smart buildings, public mobility pilots)
- Exposure to Stakeholders: Present your solution to public authorities and cleantech buyers looking for innovation
- Entry to Acceleration Pathway: Selected innovators can move forward to tailored support such as pilot planning, technical guidance or follow-up matchmaking

Figure 2 HelpDesk - Program entry

2.3 Program timeline

The program timeline gives an overview of the activities, from matchmaking to piloting and upscaling.

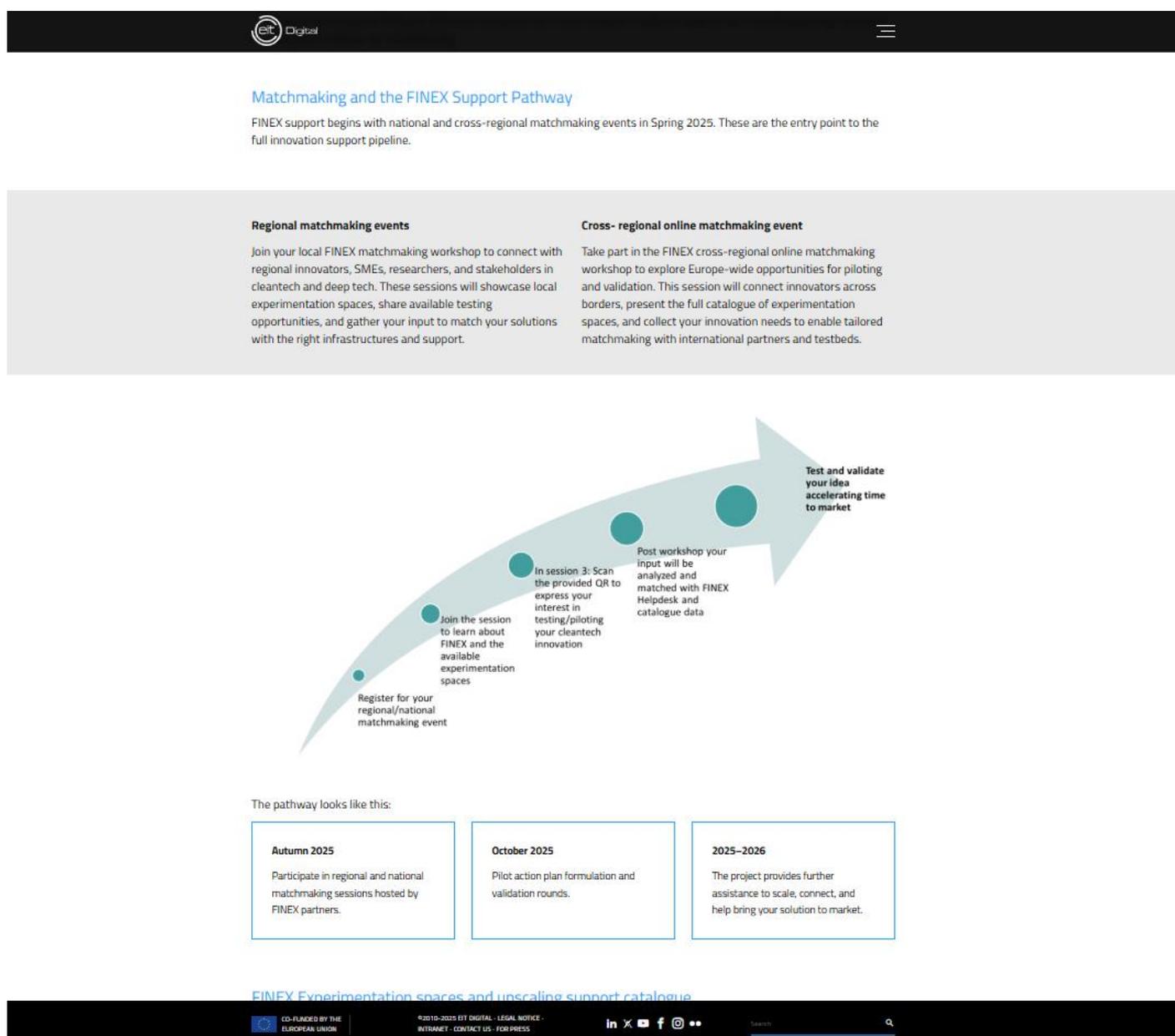


Figure 3 HelpDesk - Pathway

2.4 Experimentation resources

As part of the FINEX project, collaborative spaces, business development programs, experimentation spaces, and funding opportunities were mapped across our innovation ecosystem countries – Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Finland, Cyprus, and Bulgaria. The catalogue is available through the HelpDesk, offering a clear overview of existing resources, capabilities, and competences related to experimenting with deep tech solutions in FI, EE, LV, LT, BG and CY and beyond.

FINEX Experimentation spaces and upscaling support catalogue

If you got a bright idea and need a place to test it, funding to grow it or a program to accelerate it, then explore the [FINEX Resource Catalogue](#). As part of the FINEX project, we mapped collaborative spaces, business development programs, experimentation spaces, and funding opportunities across our innovation ecosystem countries – Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Finland, Cyprus, and Bulgaria. The catalogue is now available, offering a clear overview of existing resources, capabilities, and competences. Explore the catalogue and discover the opportunities best suited for you.

If you need guidance or have questions, don't hesitate to reach out to the contacts listed below, we're here to help.

How to Participate

Participation in matchmaking events is by invitation. Each country partner will shortlist around 5–10 innovators based on relevance and readiness.

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Figure 4 HelpDesk - FINEX Experimentation Resources Catalogue

2.5 How to participate & Contacts

The HelpDesk provides also contact points in all partner countries and at the EU level that help innovators to find partners and suitable experimentation resources locally and internationally.

How to Participate

Participation in matchmaking events is by invitation. Each country partner will shortlist around 5–10 innovators based on relevance and readiness.

Matchmaking events will be organised in the following countries:

<p>Bulgaria</p> <p>Simeon Malinov simeon.malinov@gate-ai.eu LinkedIn</p> <p>Organization The Big Data for Smart Society Institute (GATE), Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski</p>	<p>Cyprus</p> <p>Yiota Victoria Phakoukaki phakoukaki.yiota-victoria@ucy.ac.cy LinkedIn</p> <p>Theocharis Theocharides ttheocharides@ucy.ac.cy</p> <p>Organization KIOS Center of Excellence for Research & Innovation, University of Cyprus</p>	<p>Estonia</p> <p>Carina Bitsikov carina.bitsikov@taltech.ee LinkedIn</p> <p>Organization FinEst Centre for Smart Cities, TalTech</p>
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Figure 5 HelpDesk - Contacts

2.6 Opportunities & events

The FINEX HelpDesk provides information about upcoming and past events that are updated regularly.

Upcoming Events

<p>Bulgaria – Matchmaking Event <i>Planned for Autumn 2025</i> <i>Online event</i> This is national matchmaking event</p>	<p>Cyprus – Matchmaking Event <i>Planned for Autumn 2025</i> <i>Online event</i> This is national matchmaking event</p>
<p>Estonia – Matchmaking Event <i>Planned for Autumn 2025</i> <i>Online event</i> This is national matchmaking event</p>	<p>Finland – Matchmaking Event Venue: Aalto University, Otakaari 1 (old main building), Room R001/K101 H1 Date & time: 25.9.2025, 09:30–14:00 Practical info:</p>

Figure 6 HelpDesk - Upcoming Events

Past Events

<p>Connecting innovators with public testbeds to accelerate European cleantech</p> <p>This session will unpack how the FINEX initiative connects startups, scaleups, corporates, public actors, and research institutions with testbeds to accelerate cleantech and deep tech innovation in Finland and across Europe.</p> <p>11 June 2025, 11:00–12:00 EET Online (via Teams)</p> <p>Who should join?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleantech startups & scaleups • Universities & universities of applied sciences 	<p>Driving European Cleantech Growth - FINEX Cross-Regional Dialogue</p> <p>Join us for the FINEX Cleantech Information Session, where we'll introduce a new European initiative accelerating regional and cross-border cleantech and deep tech innovation. Where we showcase how the FINEX project supports startups, scaleups, corporates, public actors, universities, and research institutions working on cleantech solutions.</p> <p>12 June 2025, 11:00–12:00 EET Online (via Teams)</p> <p>Who should attend?</p>
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Figure 7 HelpDesk - Past Events

2.7 Materials and FAQ

Finally, the webpage also provides access to additional project materials, guidance, and answers to common questions.

Project Materials

1. General Information

- [FINEX One-pager](#) (PDF)
→ A concise 1-page summary of the project's objectives and general information
- [Pitch Presentation](#) (PDF / Slide deck)
→ Visual slides for stakeholder briefings and event use

2. Policy & Regulation Materials (currently being updated)

3. Communication Kit (currently being updated)

Frequently Asked Questions

Do I need a fully developed product?	▼
Can I participate if I'm not based in a partner country?	▼
Does FINEX provide funding?	▼
What is a testbed or experimentation space?	▼
Will I receive mentoring or support beyond the events?	▼
How do I know if I've been selected?	▼

Figure 8 HelpDesk - Resources and FAQ

3. Conclusions

The FINEX Helpdesk has been successfully established as a joint interregional service under Task 5.3, providing a single, coordinated point of access for innovators across the six partner countries. It combines a central online presence with a decentralised network of national contact points, ensuring both accessibility and personalised guidance. By clearly mapping and communicating the FINEX support pathway, the Helpdesk enables innovators to connect with relevant matchmaking events, experimentation opportunities, and expert resources.

Since its launch in 2025, the Helpdesk has supported the first information and networking activities of the project, created direct links between innovators and national partners, and set up operational processes for pre-selection and referral. It has already demonstrated value in improving the visibility of opportunities, streamlining engagement with multiple stakeholders, and capturing useful feedback on innovators' needs and barriers.

Looking ahead, the Helpdesk will continue to serve as a core interface between WP5 outreach and matchmaking activities and WP6 piloting actions. Its monitoring data will inform the project's KPI reporting and provide insights for refining services and tools in WP4. The planned national and EU-level matchmaking events in autumn 2025 will further test and validate the Helpdesk's role as a central hub in the FINEX innovation support pipeline.

The service will remain active and adaptive throughout the project, with regular reviews to ensure alignment with partner activities, sectoral developments, and the needs of innovators. In doing so, it will contribute directly to the project's overarching objective of accelerating cleantech and deep tech innovation through cross-border collaboration and efficient use of experimentation spaces.

References

FINEX Grant Agreement

FINEX Consortium Agreement