



I3-INSHAPE: Working to establish the INSHAPE Network for Sports & Vitality's SMEs

Partners from six European regions met in Finland to advance the final steps of the I3-INSHAPE project and prepare for the November 2026 launch of the INSHAPE Network of Innovation Hubs.

On **12–13 March 2026**, the fifteen partner organisations of the I3-INSHAPE project gathered in Kainuu, Finland, for a **two-day project meeting**.

Hosted by the **University of Jyväskylä** and **Kajaani University of Applied Sciences (KAMK)** in the heart of the Finnish wilderness of **Kainuu region**, the gathering brought together fifteen organisations from six European regions South Netherlands, Brussels-Capital Region, Päijät-Häme, Kainuu, Lapland (FI), Észak-Alföld (HU), Comunidad Valenciana, and Catalunya (ES) to review progress and align on the project's final phase, with one shared goal in focus: the **launch of the INSHAPE Network of Innovation Hubs** in November 2026.

A key starting point was the **Innovation Support Programme (ISP)**. Partners agreed on a new team structure to maximise the ISP's impact in its final phase. The programme provides **hands-on, step-by-step guidance to SMEs**, from idea development to EU market entry. The recent **IPR and GDPR online training modules** highlighted the importance of these topics for the implementation of the SME's projects and were defined as highly valuable tools for companies navigating the European innovation landscape.

After that, the **Business Model** talk highlighted the strong SME's demand for support on **revenue streams, joint venture acceleration, and marketing**. Meanwhile, pilot testing of the *I3 Collaborative Projects* (which entered INSHAPE through the project's Open Call in 2025) is actively underway, with hub managers supervising SMEs as they **bring their solutions to market**.

At the same time, the upcoming **INSHAPE Connect digital** platform will serve as the operational backbone of the Network, enabling SMEs across regions to offer and request services, find partners, and cooperate across borders. A structured monitoring framework and a comprehensive Service Brochure are being finalised ahead of the November launch.

*“We are not just wrapping up a project — comments **René Wijlens**, from the **Project Leaders Cluster Sports & Technology (CST)** — we are laying the foundations of something that will outlast it. The INSHAPE Network is our answer to what European SMEs in sports and vitality have been missing: a permanent, connected ecosystem where innovation is built together.”*

The **INSHAPE Network of Innovation Hubs** will officially launch in **Eindhoven** on **10-12 November 2026**, marking the transition from a funded project to a **self-sustaining European ecosystem**. For SMEs and startups in the sports and vitality sector, it will **offer access to interregional partnerships, innovation support, and a clear pathway to scale across the EU**.

About I3-INSHAPE

I3-INSHAPE is an EU-funded project under the Interregional Innovation Investments (I3) instrument, building a European competence centre for SME innovation in the sports and vitality sector. The project unites 15 partner organisations across 6 European regions: Cluster Sports & Technology – CST, IMEC, InnoBeweegLab (NL) | EPSI (BE) | LAB University of Applied Sciences, LADEC, University of Jyväskylä, KAMK, LUAS (FI) | MSE Cluster Ltd (HU) | Universidad Europea de Valencia, 4ivlcesport, Metric Salad, ACCIÓ, INDESCAT (ES).

More information: <https://www.i3-inshape.eu/>