



## EU4Digital: supporting digital economy and society in the Eastern Partnership


### Guide for EaP stakeholders on joining Innovation for Manufacturing SMEs (I4MS)

#### About this Guide

This Guide provides an in-depth overview of the possibilities for stakeholders of the six Eastern partner countries to join the selected specialised EU networks and platforms in the area of ICT Innovation.

The **goal** of this Guide is to further support the integration of the EaP stakeholders with EU networks and platforms introduced during a series of EU4Digital networking events with lead EU organisations on the policy topics prioritized by the countries.

#### Innovation for Manufacturing SMEs (I4MS) profile

	<p><b>Policy area:</b> Digitising industry (digital transformation of SMEs in traditional sectors)</p> <p><b>EU4Digital networking topic:</b> <a href="#">Networking with EU Digital Innovation Hubs to enable the development of competence centres, platforms, tools and services supporting digital transformation of SMEs</a></p>
<b>Organisation details</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Short description:</b> The <a href="#">I4MS</a> is the EU initiative to digitalise the manufacturing industry (SMEs and mid-caps). It is promoted by the European Commission to expand the digital innovation of manufacturing SMEs in Europe and is one of the key initiatives of the European Commission to shape the pan-European network of Digital Innovation Hubs (DIHs). 84% of its industrial members are SMEs, to whom I4MS provides an opportunity to apply for technological and financial support to experiment with different technologies and services, to improve the innovation skills of staff and the technologies and services that the company provides. I4MS maintains the community of experts, the working groups and the contact points across Europe. Finally, I4MS has support partners such as FundingBox Accelerator which is a non-profitable initiative promoting and launching technological and innovative businesses in Europe. <a href="#">Presentation of organisation</a></li> <li>• <b>Mission statement:</b> The main goal is to support manufacturing SMEs and mid-caps in the widespread use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in their business operations. The objective is to accelerate the uptake of digital technologies in processes across Europe focused on extending the transformative impact to companies, regions and sectors, and supporting personalised and cost-effective small-scale production based on secure digital technologies.</li> <li>• <b>Priority topic(-s):</b> Technological areas related to the digital transformation of manufacturing SMEs such Smart modelling, Robotics, Internet of Things, Cybersecurity and others (see for more <a href="#">here</a>).</li> <li>• <b>Community:</b> I4MS connects and collaborates with many organisations across Europe, including different types of organisations such as SMEs (the biggest group constituting 40% of the network), DIHs (a second largest group with about 30% of organisations), which connect I4MS indirectly with the SMEs and facilitate support to SMEs, intermediary support organisations, public administration, corporates, industry associations.</li> </ul>	
<b>Potential beneficiaries and opportunities</b>	
<p><b>Ultimate goal:</b> Provide more opportunities for EaP manufacturing SMEs to get access to finance and expertise for digital transformation.</p>	
<p><b>Main beneficiaries addressed by EU4Digital activity:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Business associations</i> and organisations that can support local manufacturing SMEs by promoting I4MS services, such as cascade funding and testing of technologies.</li> <li>• <i>Competence centres</i> and organisations with specialized technological expertise that can develop their capacity to support SMEs in digital transformation by accessing specialized</li> </ul>	



trainings for their experts, through knowledge exchange and transfer of service toolkits from European DIHs.

**Additional beneficiaries:**

- Manufacturing SMEs (directors, managers, specialists, others) who can deepen their knowledge and get access to tools/services for digital transformation.
- Training and technology providers, individual experts in the area of supporting digital transformation of traditional SMEs who can increase and promote their expertise by joining the I4MS online community, working groups and using training opportunities.

**Available services and tools**

*(services/tools description and eligibility criteria)*

**1. Joining the online community**

- a) **Service description:** Knowledge-sharing platform to connect start-ups and SMEs informally with fellow innovators, entrepreneurs and professionals, including information on funding opportunities, experience gain from other organisations' projects, opportunity to find a partner for the project.
- b) **Eligibility/target group:** individual experts in the area of digital transformation regardless of their country looking for useful information about Industry 4.0 and connections.
- c) **How to join?**
  - [Sign up](#) to FundingBox ID.
  - Explore [Members directory](#) – connect with the community members' profiles; create chat groups; join existing and create new communities.

**How Business associations / Competence centres can benefit?**  
Facilitate the increase in scope and depth the digital transformation expertise among their expert communities and experts of member SMEs by promoting the opportunity to join I4MS community.

**2. Brokerage system (by FundingBox)**

- a) **Service description:**
  - The system allows SMEs *from any country* to view and contact the relevant innovation and technology adoption projects financed by the European Union.
  - SMEs *from eligible countries* can get access to financial resources to test new technologies and access to training to upskill workers.
- b) **Eligibility/target group:** Manufacturing SMEs that would like to improve their technology adoption cycle more quickly and smartly.
  - To be eligible for funding, SME or mid-cap should be legally established i.e. be located in [the Member States of the European Union and its Overseas Countries and Territories \(OCT\)](#), in [Associated Countries to H2020](#), which currently includes Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia and Armenia (see [Guide for Applicants](#)).
- c) **How to join?**
  - Watch the video [Brokering System Application Guide](#).
  - [Sign up](#) to receive your FundingBox ID and then fill in the [application form](#).

**How Business associations / Competence centres can benefit?**  
Facilitate technology brokerage among their tenant SMEs by promoting the service. In the countries ineligible for funding, SMEs can still connect to specific projects and consider independent collaboration.

**3. Projects and cascade funding**

- a) **Service description:** SMEs can apply for technological and financial support to conduct experiments, happening during open calls. As a result, SMEs can test Industry 4.0 technologies and assess the impact of scaling them up within their companies. More details about the projects are below:



- Short project durations of approx. 6 months with immediate results.
- Offer between 50% and 100% of equity-free funding to SMEs, mid-caps, and DIHs.
- The funding is organized and provided through Innovation Actions (introduced in service No 4 below), which makes the evaluation process much quicker and effective.

**b) Eligibility/target group:** Manufacturing SMEs and mid-caps from eligible countries (vary among projects).

- To be eligible, SME or mid-cap should be legally established i.e. be located in [the Member States of the European Union and its Overseas Countries and Territories \(OCT\)](#), in [Associated Countries to H2020](#) (see [Guide for Applicants](#)).

**c) How to join?**

- Check the calendar of [open calls](#) to choose the relevant project.
- [Sign in](#) with your Funding Box ID and apply for the relevant [open call](#).
- In addition, explore the open links to I4MS projects and I4MS contact points on the [map](#).

**How Business associations / Competence centres can benefit?**

Facilitate access to funding for digital transformation by promote the service among their tenant SMEs.

**4. Testing with one of the technologies supported by I4MS via Innovation Actions initiative (under HORIZON 2020)**

**a) Service description:** Enabling SMEs to implement Application Experiments (AEs) based on specific I4MS technologies and deploying a pilot project to test its implications in a particular business process. To explore more see: [list of I4MS technology providers, Catalogue](#) of latest technological proposals created under I4MS umbrella and examples of successful AEs, [tableau of best practices](#) of AEs, [Database of Application experiments](#) covering the range of custom manufacturing sectors.

**b) Eligibility/target group:** Cross-border consortia formed by combinations of manufacturing SMEs, tech providers and DIHs. To be eligible for funding, organisations should be legally established i.e. be located in [the Member States of the European Union and its Overseas Countries and Territories \(OCT\)](#), in [Associated Countries to H2020](#) (see [Guide for Applicants](#)).

**c) How to join?** [Sign up](#) to receive your FundingBox ID.

**How Business associations / Competence centres can benefit?**

Promote the service among their tenant SMEs to facilitate access to facilitate testing and piloting of digital transformation technological options. All countries can explore the list of providers and contact them for usage of technological proposals with own funding.

**5. Strategic Working Groups**

**a) Service description:**

- Suggesting policy recommendations to advise EC, regional and national policymakers on new programmes and strategies: WG1 - Best Practices and supporting mechanisms (mostly for policy-makers) and WG2 - Upskilling challenges in the manufacturing industry (mostly for training providers).
- Participation allows face-to-face meetings with covered expenses; be showcased at the 'I4MS Talks' webinar series; connect I4MS stakeholders & community; set joint strategies to leverage investments; tackle specific challenges and draw policy recommendations, and others.

**b) Eligibility/target group:** individual experts from companies or organisations from any country.

**c) How to join?** Fill in the online [form](#).



### How Business associations / Competence centres can benefit?

Delegate experts of organisation to WGs to make an impact for the digital single market development in local country/region.

## 6. Training opportunities

### a) Service description:

- [Catalogue of training opportunities](#) provided in different modes by I4MS members related to different technological areas as IoT, Robotics, AI, HPC, Cloud and others.
- Trainings cover all Technology Absorption Cycle stages (e.g. awareness of technology, configuration, implementation and operation).

### b) Eligibility/target group:

- Manufacturing SMEs and mid-caps (from directors to engineers and operators).
- Digital innovation hubs, competence centers, other organisations supporting digital transformation of traditional SMEs.
- Individual experts supporting digital transformation of traditional SMEs.
- Note: organisations can submit proposals to include their training into the catalog, except trainings from private institutions and those that are part of the official curricula (e.g. Masters) are not being promoted.

### c) How to join? [Search](#) for training opportunities and [submit](#) the proposal for new trainings to the Training Catalogue via online form (subject to validation by I4MS team).

### How Business associations / Competence centres can benefit?

Increase organisation's capacity to service and support SMEs by training experts as well as promote their organisation by delivering trainings to other DIHs and SMEs.

## 7. Network of I4MS Contact Points

### a) Service description: Becoming a part of exclusive I4MS contact points network, which brings together all key actors of smart manufacturing in Europe who are working for the digitalisation of manufacturing SMEs and taking the initiative to disseminate information on opportunities provided by I4MS on the national level. The list of potential benefits as a contact point and contribution opportunities are provided below:

- Formal links to I4MS initiatives to replicate solutions and services.
- Provision of access to first-hand information about the latest market trends and funding opportunities.
- Access to training.
- Exclusive activities for members only (e.g. webinars, I4MS Ambassadors).
- Possibility to host Industry 4.0 workshop (the best performing I4MS Contact Point will be offered the opportunity to host one of these events).
- Possibility to select a type of partnership: cross-dissemination partnership via Silver Plan (free of charge), or extended I4MS technologies partnership via the Golden Plan (for more details see [here](#)).
- Possibility to contribute by leading the online discussions and providing feedback to policy recommendations and surveys.
- Possibility to contribute by sharing key contents and opportunities of I4MS (open calls, news, articles, etc.) in your communication channels.

### b) Eligibility/target group: actors from eligible countries covering Associated Countries to H2020, which includes Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine:

- I4MS Innovation Action consortia members.
- Digital Innovation Hubs or other EU projects.
- University/Research & technology organizations.



- SMEs and mid-caps.
- Large enterprises.
- Intermediaries supporting SMEs (Chamber of Commerce, EEN, BIC, cluster).
- Corporates/private investor organisations.
- Public Administrations.

**c) How to join?**

- Fill in the [Application form](#) for DIHs/ I4MS Innovation Actions or [Application form](#) for other entities from eligible countries.

**How Business associations / Competence centres can benefit?**

Increase organisation's capacity to service and support SMEs via transfer of up-to-date information and experience sharing in a dedicated community.

**Contacts and links**

**Contacts:**

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[Direct contact at I4MS Community](#)

[I4MS Contact Points](#) across EU countries

**Links:**

[Twitter](#); [LinkedIn](#)

[Subscribe](#) to the newsletter and participate in [events](#).