InnovAuite SLOVAKIA

Deliverable

D1.5: Action Plan for International Networking

WP1 Project Management

Responsible partner: Gratex International, a.s.
Partners: DFKI, IT4I, Asseco, UK BA

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RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE PLAN

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE FOR THE RECOVERY PLAN AND THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY

VAIA RESEARCH AND INNOVATION AUTHORITY

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Revision history			
Version	**Date**	**Comment**	**Author**
V1	28.02.2026	First version	Deni Knotka
V2	23.03.2026	Revised first version	André Antakli
V3	25.03.2026	Final version	Denis Knotka

1 Executive summary

This document represents Deliverable D1.5: Action Plan for International Networking, developed within the framework of the InnovAIte Slovakia project. The primary objective is to provide a strategic roadmap that strengthens international cooperation and enhances knowledge exchange between Slovak research entities and the global scientific community. By establishing these connections, the project aims to move beyond theoretical AI exploration toward high-readiness industrial applications. This deliverable serves as a mechanism to ensure the project's research outputs are scalable, ethically compliant, and integrated into the broader European AI landscape.

The action plan is structured around five strategic pillars: Computational Access, Academic Excellence, Industrial Scaling, Ethical Harmonization, and Regional Development. A core finding of the international mapping process is that networking is not merely a peripheral activity but a vital necessity for modern AI development. Key findings highlight that the computational intensity required for training advanced AI models exceeds national capacities, necessitating access to European supercomputing networks such as EuroHPC. Furthermore, the analysis identifies the critical role of foreign excellence partners, specifically DFKI and IT4I, who act as primary conduits for integrating the Slovak consortium into elite networks like ELLIS, CLAIRE, and the ADRA Association.

The consortium concludes that international networking is indispensable for achieving the project's long-term scientific and technological impact. The rapidly evolving regulatory environment, defined by the EU AI Act and the Data Act, requires constant cross-border collaboration to harmonize standards of transparency and accountability. To remain competitive, it is essential for the consortium to align its research activities with future European funding opportunities, particularly within the Horizon Europe Cluster 4 Work Programme. This strategic alignment ensures that localized innovations in energy management, traffic safety, and software automation are validated against the highest European benchmarks.

The significance of this action plan lies in its ability to transform a localized research effort into a central node of the European AI ecosystem. By bridging the gap between domestic innovation and international research excellence, the consortium secures the sustainability of its results beyond the initial project duration. This connectivity is vital for the long-term economic transformation of Slovakia, positioning the country as an active and influential participant in the global digital revolution. The networking activities established here ensure that the project's contributions to building energy efficiency and road safety continue to evolve in line with international technological advancements.

2 Introduction

This deliverable has been prepared within the framework of the project InnovAIte Slovakia: Illuminating Pathways for AI-Driven Breakthroughs, which represents a fundamental shift in the national approach to Artificial Intelligence. The project was launched under the "Transformation and Innovation Consortia" call, supported by the Recovery and Resilience Plan of the Slovak Republic. This document, titled Action Plan for International Networking, is a key output of Work Package 1, specifically addressing the strategic integration of Slovak research efforts into the global scientific community.

List the key actors:

Participating Project Partners		Role	Involved key experts	1st stage Reviewer	2nd stage reviewer / SB rapporteur
Gratex International, a.s.	**Gratex**	**Lead**	Ivan Polášek		**Ivan Polášek**
Asseco central Europe, a.s.	ACE	Partner	Patrik Břečka		
Vysoká škola báňská - Technická univerzita Ostrava	IT4@VSB	Partner	Tomáš Karásek		
Deutsches Forschungszentrum für Künstliche Intelligenz GmbH (DFKI)	DFKI	Partner	André Antakli	**André Antakli**	
Slovenská technická univerzita v Bratislave	STU BA	Partner	Tomáš Funtík		
Univerzita Komenského v Bratislave	UK BA	Partner	Viktor Kocur		
Trenčianska univerzita Alexandra Dubčeka v Trenčíne	TnUAD	Partner	Eva Grmanová		
Centrum vedecko-technických informácií Slovenskej republiky	CVTI	Partner	David Cymbalák		

The primary objective of this deliverable is to strengthen international cooperation, enhance knowledge exchange, and increase the involvement of the project and its partners in

international research and innovation activities. It serves as a strategic roadmap to establish Slovakia as a central node in the European AI landscape, moving beyond theoretical exploration toward high-readiness industrial applications.

The Action Plan targets several specific and measurable goals to support the consortium's internationalization:

- **Excellence Integration** - bringing international research excellence to AI implementation and innovation activities in Slovakia.
- **Network Involvement** - actively engaging InnovAIte Slovakia and its members in European AI research activities, networks, and platforms.
- **Capacity Building** - strengthening the research and innovation capacities of Slovak institutions through the transfer of international know-how and best practices.
- **Strategic Collaboration** - establishing joint collaborative teams between Slovak and international researchers to foster scientific and technological advancement.

This deliverable is significant as it provides the primary mechanism for ensuring the relevance, scalability, and ethical compliance of the project's research outputs. It acts as a bridge between domestic challenges and the massive computational and intellectual resources available at the European level. The Action Plan will be used to guide the consortium through initial stakeholder mapping, active networking phases, and long-term sustainability efforts, ensuring that Slovakia remains an active participant in the digital and green transitions of the European Union.

3 Project Context, Objectives of WP1

The project titled "InnovAIte Slovakia: Illuminating Pathways for AI-Driven Breakthroughs" represents a fundamental shift in the national approach to Artificial Intelligence, moving beyond theoretical exploration toward high-readiness industrial applications. The project is designed as a robust, long-term collaboration that spans 30 months, consisting of eight well-structured work packages. Within this framework, international networking is not a peripheral activity but the primary mechanism for ensuring the relevance, scalability, and ethical compliance of the project's research outputs. It acts as a bridge between domestic challenges and the massive computational and intellectual resources available at the European level.

Relevant Specific Objectives

SO Nr.	Specific Objective (SO)	SO Description and Verification
O.1	Research Excellence and Innovation (Verification: Peer Review and Publications)	**Objective**: To conduct cutting-edge research in AI across various WPs, resulting in a minimum of 34 peer-reviewed publications in reputable journals and conferences within the project duration. **Verification**: Research outputs will undergo rigorous peer review. The number of publications and their impact factors will serve as indicators of research excellence.
O.9	International Collaboration (Verification: Collaborative Projects and Publications)	**Objective**: To engage in a minimum of 3 collaborative international projects and co-publish at least 10 research papers with international partners within the project duration. **Verification**: Documentation of collaborative projects and publications will demonstrate international engagement.

Relevant Work Package

WP Nr.	Work Package (WP)	WP Lead Partner	Task	Task Lead Partner	Task Leader
WP1	AI - Project management	Gratex	T1.5. Involving InnovAIte Slovakia and Project consortium members in European AI Research Activities and networks	Gratex	Denis Knotka

International networking is strategically aligned with the thematic focus of the individual work packages to maximize their scientific and technological impact:

- **WP3 (Cross-Domain AI)** - focuses on academic excellence and ethical harmonization. It leverages the CLAIRE and ELLIS networks and partnership with DFKI to develop human-centered AI frameworks and peer-reviewed publications.

- **WP4 (AI-Driven Buildings)** and **WP5 (AI-Driven Video)** - focus on computational access. These work packages utilize the EuroHPC Joint Undertaking and IT4I Ostrava to access exascale hardware necessary for energy modeling and synthetic image data generation.

- **WP6 (AI-Driven Software)** - focuses on strategic autonomy and software engineering. It aligns with the European "Edge-Cloud Continuum" to automate software development stages while ensuring code security.
- **WP7 (AI-Driven Insurance)** - focuses on operational efficiency and industrial scaling. It utilizes associations like ADRA to implement explainable AI and ensure compliance with the EU AI Act.
- **WP8 (AI-Infused Prototypes)** - focuses on bridging the lab to the market. It uses the AI-on-Demand platform as a primary channel for technology transfer to European SMEs and corporate partners.

The implementation of networking across the work packages will lead to the formation of joint collaborative teams consisting of Slovak and international researchers. This will result in at least 10 joint publications and the development of 34 peer-reviewed articles. Furthermore, these activities facilitate the identification of future opportunities for joint projects, including the submission of at least six new applications in Horizon Europe or other EU initiatives.

This deliverable is closely linked to D1.4 (Plan for Knowledge Sharing and Ensuring Excellence) and D1.3 (Data Management Plan). While D1.3 manages the produced data, D1.5 provides the international dissemination and networking channels to ensure that this data and the resulting prototypes (WP8) reach the broader European innovation ecosystem.

4 Updated scope definition and methodology

The baseline for the international networking strategy is defined by the current status of the Slovak Republic as a "Widening Country" within the European innovation ecosystem. While domestic research capacities are growing, there is a recognized gap in the integration of localized efforts into global scientific networks. The primary challenge identified is that the computational intensity required for modern AI training—particularly for video analytics and generative models—exceeds national infrastructure limits. Furthermore, the rapid evolution of the European regulatory landscape, including the EU AI Act and the Data Act, necessitates a baseline shift from isolated development toward collaborative, cross-border compliance and resource pooling.

The solution lies in the creation of an "Ecosystem of Excellence" and an "Ecosystem of Trust" by anchoring the consortium in established European networks. The strategy utilizes foreign excellence partners, specifically the German Research Center for Artificial Intelligence (DFKI) and the IT4Innovations National Supercomputing Center (IT4I), as primary conduits for global integration. By establishing a bridge between domestic challenges—such as energy efficiency and traffic safety—and European-level resources, the project ensures that its outputs are scalable, peer-reviewed, and ready for the international market.

The operationalization of this networking strategy follows the Key Impact Pathways (KIPs) methodology, designed to capture and maximize scientific, societal, and technological impacts. The approach is structured into four logical and time-bound phases:

- **Phase 1: Initial Phase – Baseline Assessment and Stakeholder Mapping (M12 – M20)** - focuses on a rigorous mapping of the international AI landscape. It involves identifying technical and non-technical challenges and using stakeholder-mapping tools to prioritize institutions, initiatives, and decision-makers most relevant to the project's thematic areas.
- P**hase 2: Implementation Phase – International Networking Activities (M18 – M28)** - represents the core operational period. Activities include the formation of joint collaborative teams between Slovak and international researchers, active engagement with the AI-on-Demand platform, and participation in high-level international forums to showcase project results and secure additional computational resources.
- **Phase 3: Consolidation, Prioritization, and Project Landing (M26 – M30)** – the consortium prioritizes the most successful networking links for long-term maintenance. Efforts focus on finalizing the ownership structure for the planned startup and identifying commercialization channels through established international partnerships.
- **Phase 4**: **Sustainability Period (5 Years after Project Completion)** - ensures the transition of project-based cooperation into stable, long-term formats. The focus is on the

maturation of commercialization pathways, maintaining strategic links with European R&I networks, and ensuring continued alignment with evolving European standards and policies.

5 Deliverable content

5.1. Strategic Pillars of the International Networking

The Action Plan is built upon five strategic pillars that define the consortium's trajectory within the global AI ecosystem:

- **Computational Access:** Accessing exascale hardware via EuroHPC and IT4I Ostrava.
- **Academic Excellence:** Integration into ELLIS and CLAIRE networks for scientific exchange and joint publications.
- **Industrial Scaling:** Technology transfer through ADRA and the AI-on-Demand platform.
- **Ethical Harmonization:** Alignment with the EU AI Act in collaboration with DFKI.
- **Regional Development:** Localizing global best practices through CVTI SR.

5.2. Table of Implementation Milestones

The following milestones monitor the structured development of international networking activities:

Nr.	Milestone	Due Date
APM0	International networking methodology and stakeholder mapping approach agreed	M14
APM1	List of potential partners and initiatives elaborated	M18
APM2	Relevant Horizon Europe and other EU calls and initiatives / projects identified	M18
APM3	List of international conferences and events elaborated	M18
APM4	Cooperation with selected international projects and institutions established	M24
APM5	Expressions of interest / letters of intent / cooperation agreements secured	M26
APM6	Project proposals / applications (at least 3) submitted in Horizon EU or other EU initiatives submitted	M28
APM7	Publications in cooperation with international partners / researchers submitted in relevant journals	M28
APM8	Action Plan Implementation Report elaborated	M30

APM9	Sustainability roadmap for post-project international networking elaborated	M30
APM10	Action Plan Implementation Report submitted	M30

5.3. Table of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

The effectiveness of the networking effort is measured through these specific indicators

Nr.	Indicator / Measurement	Due Date	Means of Verification
KPI1	List of relevant Horizon EU other EU initiatives calls for proposals	M18	Document – list of calls for projects
KPI2	List of relevant international partners / projects for future cooperation	M18	Document – database of projects
KPI3	At least 2 cooperations established with relevant universities and academic sector institutions outside Slovakia	M26	Letter of intent, articles, publication, project proposal, memorandum on cooperation, cooperation agreement
KPI4	At least 2 cooperations established with relevant institutions from following sectors / areas: Research and Technology Organizations, Industry and Innovation Ecosystems and / or International Networks and Platforms	M26	Letter of intent, articles, publication, project proposal, memorandum on cooperation, cooperation agreement
KPI5	Participation of consortium in at least 3 international projects in connection with InnovAIte Project	M28	Project / Partnership agreement, articles, publication, conferences
KPI6	At least 10 joint publications developed and submitted for publication in cooperation with international partners / experts submitted - in connection with InnovAIte Project - publications in cooperation with consortium partners experts (DFKI, IT4) - publications in cooperation with experts outside consortium	M28	Publication
KPI7	At least 6 applications (project proposals) submitted in Horizon EU, other EU initiatives calls - project / application submitted by a consortium partner - in connection with InnovaIte Project	M28	Project Application
KPI8	Participation in at least 5 relevant international conferences, events and forums - participation of InnovAIte partner representative in connection with InnovaIte Project	M30	Conference Participation, Publication

KPI9	Participation of at least 2 international/foreign experts in InnovAIte conferences outside of consortium	M30	Conference Documentation
KPI10	International Networking and Cooperation Plan for sustainability period	M30	Document
KPI11	Action Plan Implementation Report	M30	Report

5.4. Event-Driven Networking Strategy

The plan includes a schedule of four InnovAIte Slovakia Expert Conferences (M9, M14, M25, M30) and a dedicated Hackathon (M25) to engage international talent and startups.

6 Final conclusions and recommendations

The Action Plan for International Networking and its Implementation Report for the InnovAIte Slovakia project demonstrate a nuanced understanding of the global AI landscape and Slovakia's strategic position within it. By anchoring the project in the excellence of foreign partners like DFKI and IT4I, and actively engaging with European networks (e.g. ADRA, CLAIRE, ELLIS or others), the consortium has created a robust framework for internationalization.

The transition from a localized research consortium to a European innovation hub is supported by a roadmap, structured around event-driven networking, infrastructure access, and strategic alignment with Horizon Europe. The Implementation Report confirms that the project is on track to achieve its ambitious goals, with the first milestones already met and the foundation for the project's sustainability firmly in place.

The long-term success of the InnovAIte project will be measured not only by the number of its publications or the efficiency of its algorithms but by its capacity to transform the Slovak economy into a center for high-value AI innovation. Through international networking, the consortium ensures that Slovakia is not just a spectator in the fourth/fifth industrial revolution but an active and influential participant, shaping the future of Artificial Intelligence for the benefit of society, the economy, and the environment.

7 Annexes

Not applicable

About the project

The InnovAIte Slovakia project was launched in response to the call "Transformation and Innovation Consortia" announced by the Government Office of the Slovak Republic under the Recovery and Resilience Plan of the Slovak Republic (Component 9 – Investment 2: Supporting cooperation between companies, academia, and research and development organizations). The call aims to drive systemic transformation and increase the added value of key sectors of the Slovak economy through intensive collaboration among research institutions, innovative enterprises, the public sector, and internationally renowned partners.

InnovAIte Slovakia seeks to build a dynamic and sustainable innovation ecosystem in the field of artificial intelligence (AI), effectively linking cutting-edge research with practical applications. The project emphasizes the development of AI solutions that are not only technologically advanced but also ethical, environmentally sustainable, and socially beneficial. The consortium brings together leading research centers, universities, and businesses from Slovakia, Germany, and the Czech Republic.

Key focus areas include the development of AI algorithms for improving building energy efficiency, enhancing traffic safety through video analytics, automating software development, driving digital transformation in the insurance sector, and validating functional prototypes. Special attention is also given to AI education, talent development, and the incubation of startups.

The project's outcomes will significantly strengthen Slovakia's position in research and innovation, reduce environmental burdens, increase the competitiveness of the national industry, and modernize public services. By bridging the public and private sectors with international research excellence, InnovAIte Slovakia stands as a key instrument in addressing the social and economic challenges of today.

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