STARS EU

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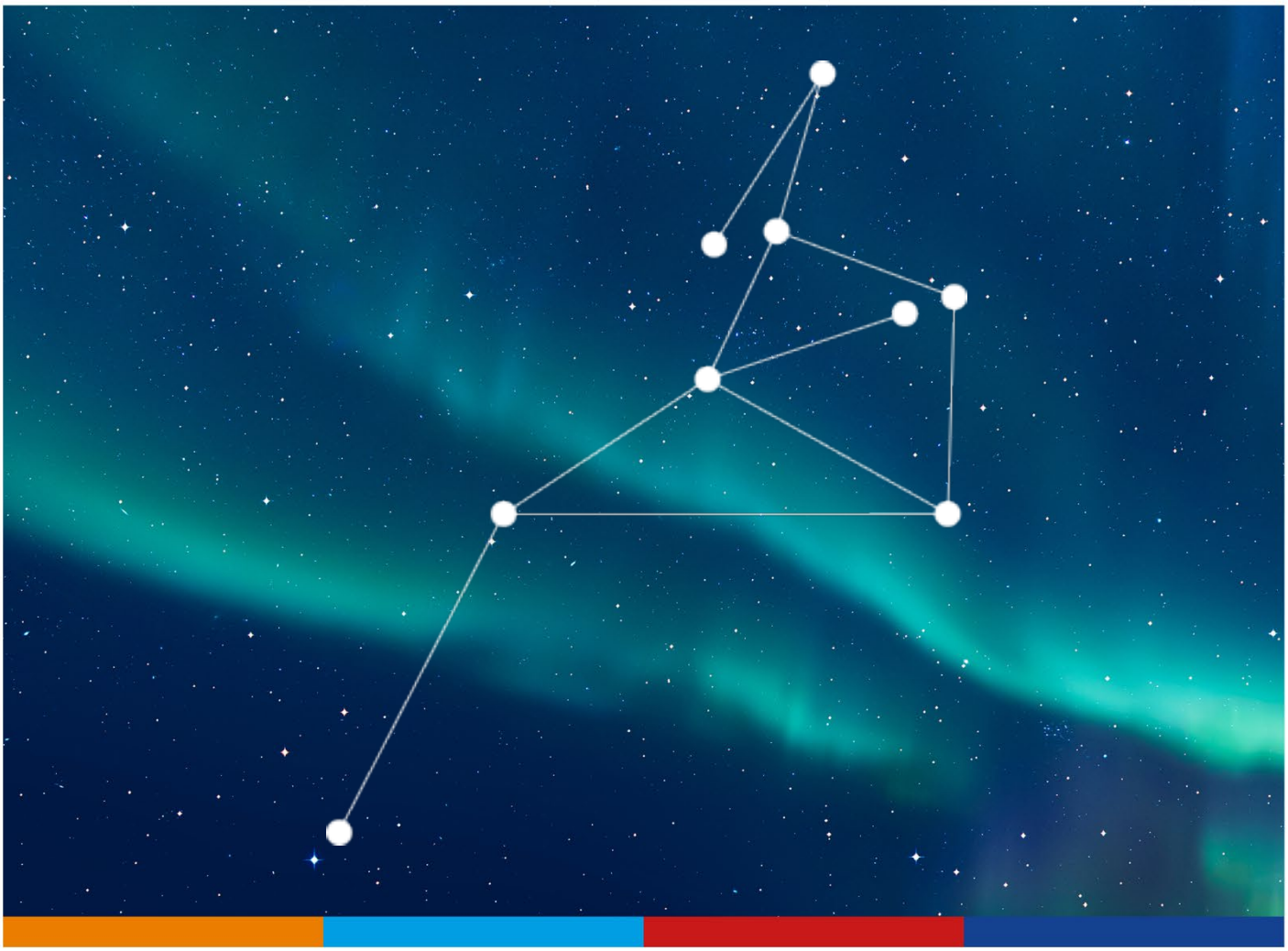
STARS EU Action plan for fostering researchers' innovation-oriented mindset

Deliverable D4.2



Deliverable D4.2 – STARS EU Action plan for fostering researchers' innovation-oriented mindset

Work package 4 – Challenge Lab

Contributing partners:

Hanze University of Applied Sciences (Hanze), NL

Bragança Polytechnic University (IPB), PT

Hochschule Bremen City University of Applied Sciences (HSB), DE

University of La Laguna (ULL), ES

Silesian University in Opava (SUO), CZ

University West (UW), SE

Cracow University of Technology (CUT), PL

University Marie and Louis Pasteur (UMLP), FR

Aleksander Moisiu University Durres (UAMD), AL

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Background

In accordance with the *New European Innovation Agenda* (NEIA)'s objectives, the **STARS EU Alliance** has identified the need to strengthen research and innovation (R&I) training across its partner universities, with a focus on developing an **entrepreneurial mindset** into researchers' thinking. A recent report on research and innovation skills (**MS10** *Developed compiled list of prior research and innovation skills to be implemented through STARS EU curricula*) compiled the R&I training existing in the STARS EU partner universities as well as their needs to improve, and formulated recommendations to attain such improvements. This action plan (**D4.2** *STARS EU Action plan for fostering researchers' innovation-oriented mindset*) builds on those recommendations and aligns with the following STARS EU objectives:

- Enhancing research capacity and cultivating entrepreneurial thinking among researchers (**WP4 – Challenge Lab)**
- Innovating educational training (e.g. joint curricula, course sharing) to support R&I skills (**WP3 – Curriculum Lab)**
- Nurturing innovation and entrepreneurial talents by closely involving regional stakeholders in STARS EU tailor-made training opportunities (**WP2 – Regional Transition Accelerator)**

The STARS EU alliance provides fertile ground for cross-border, interdisciplinary, and cross-sectoral collaboration. The following two-year action plan is designed to be scalable across different university environments and aims to embed a strong entrepreneurial culture in the STARS EU research and education community.

Overall objectives

- **Cultivate entrepreneurial culture:** Foster a strong entrepreneurial **culture across all disciplines**, encouraging creativity and innovation in research.
- **Researcher-driven innovation:** Support students, **staff, and especially early-career researchers** in translating ideas and research outcomes into innovations and ventures.
- **University–stakeholder cooperation:** Strengthen cooperation between universities and external stakeholders (quintuple helix) to enrich research with real-world insights.
- **Visibility and access:** Enhance the visibility and accessibility of entrepreneurship opportunities across the STARS EU alliance, ensuring researchers know what support and training is available.

These objectives serve the goal of **developing researchers' entrepreneurial mindsets** so that knowledge generated in laboratories and universities can be more readily converted into societal and economic value.

Key partner contributions (overview)

To achieve the above goals, each STARS EU partner will contribute unique strengths and initiatives, building on their regional expertise. *Table 1* provides an overview of major contributions per partner institution, illustrating the shared but distributed effort in this action plan:

Partner university	Key contributions to action plan
Hanze University of Applied Sciences (HUAS, Netherlands)	– **Greenhouse Entrepreneurship Approach:** Introduce and lead the implementation of the Greenhouse framework to nurture entrepreneurial growth (see Staff Development). This approach fosters entrepreneurship by creating an environment where experimentation, reflection, and collaboration are embedded in daily practice, empowering individuals to take initiative and turn ideas into action. It stimulates innovation by connecting interdisciplinary teams and providing structured support to transform emerging insights into scalable, real-world solutions. – **Student Innovation Competition:** Lead the STARS EU Student Innovation Competition in 2026, an innovative challenged-base learning experience aiming to foster entrepreneurial students' mindset.
University Marie and Louis Pasteur (UMLP, France)	– **Student Innovation Competition:** Lead the STARS EU Student Innovation Competition in 2027, an innovative challenged-based learning experience aiming to foster entrepreneurial students' mindset. – **Workshops and events:** UMLP hosts or participates in many regional workshops or events which are open to STARS EU researchers and partners. These interdisciplinary workshops and events foster innovation and an entrepreneurial mindset by encouraging collaboration across diverse fields, sparking creative problem-solving, and connecting researchers with industry and societal partners to translate ideas into real-world solutions. An example is the annual **Hacking Health event (fall 2026 and 2027)** which brings together researchers, students, healthcare professionals, carers and businesses for two days, during which challenges are presented and worked on.
Bragança Polytechnic Institute (IPB, Portugal)	– **Curriculum sharing:** Share extensive entrepreneurship curricula (e.g. two full Master's programs in Entrepreneurship & Innovation and in Product & Process Innovation, plus micro-credentials and electives) for the joint course catalogue. Offered in English and catering to local and international students, including those within STARS EU alliance. – **New courses:** Lead development of a **"Financial Literacy for Researchers"** module (2 ECTS, 14h online, in English) and host an

	International Summer School promoting entrepreneurial culture (creativity, initiative, teamwork) among students and young researchers. Offered in English.
Hochschule Bremen City University of Applied Sciences (HSB, Germany)	– **Blended Intensive Program:** Host the **Startup Entrepreneurship BIP 2025** in Bremen (December 2025) for students across the STARS EU alliance to develop startup ideas collaboratively. – **New seminars and STARS Talks:** Share best practices in **challenge-based learning** via an online seminar on integrating real-world challenges into curricula, **pitching your ideas for external funders** and potentially others. Explore entrepreneurship perspectives through professors and regional stakeholders (e.g. talk on integrating alliance activities into local teaching, R&I by Professor Martin Holi) in the STARS Talks webinar series.
Cracow University of Technology (CUT, Poland)	– **New courses:** Lead development of foundational courses **Introduction to Entrepreneurship** and **Intellectual Property Basics for Innovators** as joint MOOCs, leveraging CUT's engineering and innovation expertise. The entire curriculum will be developed within the framework of the European program SUCReD – Scaling up the Commercialization of R&D and implemented by CCT CUT. The courses in English will be delivered in an **e-learning format** and will be dedicated to students, researchers, innovators, members of innovation teams. – **Alumni Talks:** Contribute industry perspective through alumni entrepreneurs in the STARS Talks webinar series.
Silesian University in Opava (SUO, Czechia)	– **New courses:** Lead the **Design Thinking for Innovation** MOOC, bringing in social science and creativity perspectives to alliance training. – **Entrepreneurship and innovation expertise: SUO** leads the Entrepreneurship and Innovation TIG which is spearheading the STARS EU consortium's application to the Alliances for Innovation Erasmus+ call with the project **ALL4INN**.
University West (Sweden)	– **Research workshop:** Organize a **researcher training workshop** (September 2025) focusing on work-integrated learning (WIL) and how researchers can apply entrepreneurial methods in their projects (sharing University West's WIL expertise across the alliance). Mentor STARS EU alliance partners in implementing WIL approache**s.** – **Entrepreneurship into study programs:** Defining and collecting entrepreneurial content in all study programs piloting at one department at the university during 2025/26. To scale up to all study programs with the aim of supporting and developing entrepreneurial knowledge and skills both by students, PhD students and staff. Supported by external regional organisation **Drivhuset**.

University La Laguna (ULL, Spain)	– **Spin-off accelerator: TEKNE** (TEnerife KNowledge Entrepreneurship) is a new transfer programme focused on the promotion of entrepreneurial initiatives based on university knowledge. The road map establishes the official procedure an inventor or researcher (e.g., a professor, PhD student) must follow to transform university-generated knowledge or technology into a commercial enterprise (a spin-off), ensuring proper legal, administrative, and strategic oversight from the university. **TEKNE** can be replicated by other STARS EU partners. – **Entrepreneurship programmes: ULL** hosts/is part of many regional entrepreneurship programmes such as **Ingenia**, which promotes innovation and purposeful entrepreneurship in the university and pre-university community, and the **ARN – Innova** programme which promotes and strengthens entrepreneurship in the Arona municipality.
University Alexander Moisiu in Durrës (UAMD, Albania)	– **Students and industries job fair in Durrës (April 2026):** More than 40 businesses are anticipated to take part, and more than 400 students to facilitate new job and internship opportunities. – **STARS EU Day international conference (Spring 2026):** promote intellectual exchange, show off best practices, and improve collaboration amongst universities of the Alliance
All partners	– **Stakeholder engagement:** Organize regional stakeholder meetups connecting researchers with regional quintuple-helix stakeholders around the university's, the alliance's and the region's priority areas. – **European call for projects on innovation:** Establish a proposal project for the Alliances for Innovation Erasmus+ call to represent the STARS EU alliance and its innovative approaches in the European innovation ecosystem. – **STARS EU Living Labs**: Organize (trans)disciplinary interregional Living Labs rallying quintuple-helix stakeholders around the same questions, challenges and needs, to find training and research-oriented solutions. – **STARS EU Future Lab:** Organize and participate in the STARS EU Future Lab, an innovative challenge-based learning experience rallying STARS EU talent pools around challenges given by regional stakeholders, which students work on for an entire semester. – **STARS EU Mentoring Programme for young and emerging researchers**: Implement this developed program at all STARS EU partners and in that work clearly identify and support knowledge on entrepreneurial and innovation skills and mindset into the program.

Table 1: Major contributions by each STARS EU partner to the entrepreneurial mindset action plan.

Training and curriculum integration

This cluster of actions focuses on **integrating entrepreneurship and innovation training into curricula** across all partner universities through the **STARS EU Joint Curricula**. The aim is to leverage existing strengths and fill gaps by developing new offers, thereby giving researchers and students broad access to entrepreneurial skill development.

Mutualize existing courses

Through the efforts led by **WP3 – Curriculum Lab**, all partners will contribute existing entrepreneurship, innovation, and research training modules to the **STARS EU Joint Curricula**. Courses and programs will be made accessible alliance-wide (with translation to English if needed) and opened to students **from all disciplines**, including PhD candidates and postdocs, to encourage interdisciplinary entrepreneurship.

For example, **IPB** is contributing two comprehensive Master's programs in Entrepreneurship & Innovation and in Product & Process Innovation, along with a micro-credential in Innovation & Business Models and an elective "Career Business Plan" course. Other partners contribute to programs such as a **Bachelor's in Innovation & Entrepreneurship** and a **Master's in Sustainable Entrepreneurship** (available within the alliance). In France, the **PÉPITE Bourgogne-Franche-Comté** program (a national Student Center for Entrepreneurship) is shared by **UMLP**, offering five annual bootcamps and individualized follow-up to instill an innovation culture among students regionally.

By pooling these offerings on the **STARS EU digital campus portal** (currently under development), all researchers and students in the alliance can easily find and enroll in entrepreneurship and R&I courses in one place. The objective is to maximize the use of existing training assets and break down institutional silos.

Develop New Joint Courses (MOOCs/Micro-Credentials)

To address identified skill gaps (e.g. technology transfer, IP, patenting, and valorization of research), partners will co-create new online courses. These will target **various levels** (from undergraduates to PhDs and even continuing education for staff) and utilize **flexible formats** such as Massive Open Online Courses and micro-credentials, to promote lifelong learning and lifelong upskilling and reskilling. Priority topics and responsible leads include:

Joint MOOC/Micro-credential Offerings (non exhaustive)

- *Introduction to Entrepreneurship* – **Lead: CUT (Poland).** A foundation for entrepreneurial thinking, covering opportunity recognition, basic business planning and startup case studies.
- *Design Thinking for Innovation* – **Lead: SUO (Czechia).** Creative problem-solving techniques and human-centered design approach to drive innovation, with hands-on project work.
- *Intellectual Property Basics for Innovators* – **Lead: CUT (Poland).** An introduction to IP rights, patenting processes, and strategies for researchers to protect and valorize their discoveries.
- *Financial Literacy for Researchers* – **Lead: IPB (Portugal).** Finance fundamentals (budgeting, grant finance, startup funding, etc.) tailored for a research context to help scientists understand economic aspects of projects. Offered in English, 2 ECTS micro-credential (14h online) catering to both local researchers and peers in the STARS EU partner institutions.
- *Digital Skills & Entrepreneurship* – **Lead: HUAS (Netherlands).** Bridges digital literacy with entrepreneurial capability through hands-on exploration of emerging tools and creative coding. Participants learn to apply digital technologies such as prototyping software, AI-assisted design, and data visualization to real entrepreneurial challenges. The course integrates the *Vibe Coding Project* (developed by Austin and Jeroen Loef) — a playful, human-centered coding framework that enhances digital confidence and creative problem-solving across disciplines. Offered in English, this 2 ECTS micro-credential (14h online) empowers researchers and educators to turn digital potential into impactful entrepreneurial action within their institutions and ecosystems.
- *Fundraising & Pitching Techniques* – **Lead: HSB (Germany).** Teaches how to secure funding (from grants, investors, or crowdfunding) and how to communicate research-based business ideas effectively to different audiences.

By launching these joint **STARS EU-branded MOOCs and micro-credentials** (in some cases co-developed with industry partners for real-world relevance), STARS EU fills crucial training gaps. Researchers at all stages will gain access to knowledge on IP, commercialization, design thinking, and more, regardless of whether their home institution offered it before. In accordance with the STARS EU Joint Curricula, these MOOCs and micro-credentials will also **award credits or certificates**, building skills portfolios that enhance researchers' career development.

Embed Challenge-Based Learning in Curricula

Partners will integrate practical innovation challenges into standard programs to spur hands-on entrepreneurial experience. For instance, STARS EU will **launch an annual Innovation Student Competition** where student and PhD researcher teams propose **solutions to real-world problems**. Hanze will pilot this competition in 2026 (as lead organizer), and UMLP will host it in

2027. Participants will go through an innovation sprint – applying their research skills to develop prototypes or business plans – with mentorship from faculty and industry.

Similarly, **STARS EU FutureLabs' camps** (short intensive innovation labs) will be incorporated as electives or extra-curricular offerings, enabling interdisciplinary teams to tackle societal challenges in a hackathon-style format. In FutureLabs' camps, regional stakeholders are at the heart of the program as they give out challenges to teams of international and interdisciplinary students to solve. The first edition was hosted by PK in 2025, the second will be hosted by UMLP in 2026, and the third by IPB in 2027. Partners are looking into offering the FutureLab in a durable manner locally to prolong the solving of regional challenges.

In 2025, **HSB will host the third Startup Simulation Blended Intensive Programme (BIP),** which includes online preparatory work and an on-site **startup bootcamp**. The program – organized by STARS EU's Entrepreneurship & Innovation TIG and spearheaded by Stephan Form and Martin Holi – was created for students and young researchers from all STARS EU universities. This BIP focuses on forming international teams to develop startup concepts, with mentorship from Bremen's startup ecosystem. The format is intended to continue in 2026 and 2027 with alternating host universities.

The objective of Embed Challenge-Based Learning in Curricula is to ensure that researchers learn by doing – applying theory to practice – and thus to internalize entrepreneurial thinking and problem-solving as part of their education.

Joint Participation in regional Entrepreneurship Programs

The alliance will encourage all partners to take part in each other's existing innovation initiatives, creating a cross-pollination effect. For instance, partnering with other Bremen universities, HSB is co-organizing an annual **"Praxis Summer Camp"** each year. It is a three-week intensive summer camp bringing students in direct contact with companies from Bremen and beyond. Since it takes place in English, HSB is currently exploring how to mutualize this offer for other STARS EU partners – potentially starting in 2026.

Another example is the **"Hacking Health" in Besançon,** a hackathon which is local to UMLP. This 48-hour healthcare innovation marathon invites patients, caregivers, and health professionals with innovative ideas to collaborate with developers, designers, and business coaches. Alliance partners can send participants or observers to this hackathon to learn how health-sector problems are tackled in an entrepreneurial way. Diverse projects, developed by healthcare professionals, engineers, and researchers, stimulate innovation by addressing specific care, rehabilitation, and prevention needs through original devices, digital tools, and technical solutions. They encourage an entrepreneurial spirit by promoting co-design, interdisciplinary experimentation, and the development of high-impact prototypes and applications for patients and practitioners. By involving other universities (e.g. remote challenge entries or mixed teams), we strengthen cross-region collaboration.

Additionally, **IPB's International Summer School** on entrepreneurship will invite students and staff from all partners to Portugal. This program is designed to stimulate creativity, innovation, initiative, and teamwork in a multicultural setting. Participants work on entrepreneurial projects in international teams, gaining inspiration and networks.

Two more examples can be cited from **ULL's** region**.** For instance, **TEKNE** is a spin-off programme designed to support business initiatives based on knowledge generated within the university, thus transforming innovative ideas into successful businesses. On the other hand, the **Ingenia** programme promotes innovation and purposeful entrepreneurship in the university and pre-university community. It supports, trains and finances projects linked to the Sustainable Development Goals and the Canary Islands Sustainable Development Agenda promoted by students. The programme helps participants experience entrepreneurship and social innovation as drivers of change and career options. The selected projects are part of a programme that transforms realities and contributes to achieving the SDGs through collaborative work.

Another notable example is **HV's** regional **Drivhuset**, a regional entrepreneurship infrastructure aiming to develop people's entrepreneurial skills. **Drivhuset** aims to educate, empower and transform the entrepreneurial and innovation mindset of locals to contribute to sustainable development in society.

Through such shared programs, researchers broaden their horizons, learn from different regional ecosystems, and build a **STARS EU-wide entrepreneurial community**.

Workshops and staff weeks

Hands-on workshops and staff training weeks are planned to deepen skills and foster collaboration among researchers and educators in the alliance. These events focus on **specific themes** (from research commercialization to interdisciplinary challenges) and target researchers, faculty, and sometimes students. They also serve as networking opportunities across institutions.

Research Workshop (University West, 2025)

In September 2025, University West hosted a workshop aimed at enhancing research capabilities with an entrepreneurial twist. The target group was emerging researchers (PhD students, postdocs) and research support staff. The workshop emphasized **Work–Integrated Learning (WIL)** – University West's specialty – demonstrating how to incorporate real industry collaboration into research projects. Participants engaged in sessions on applying research to solve industry problems, methods for co-creation with companies, and sharing best practices in turning academic results into innovations. Attendees left with actionable strategies to make their own research more applied and impactful, and connections to peers for future cross-border projects.

Research Workshops (HSB, 2025 & 2026)

HSB will host a research conference, the **Higher Education Research Conference with a Focus on Media Didactics** on the challenges and opportunities presented by media didactics in higher education teaching and learning. The exact program will be determined in 2026.

HSB will host a research conference, the **Higher Education Research Conference focusing on Developments in Teaching and Learning** dedicated to STARS EU researchers. The goal of this conference is to foster collegial exchange on current research about developments, initiatives, and challenges in the strategic positioning of universities in the field of teaching and learning. Discussed topics include how to "Educate for Growth" (Michaela Weiss, Tomáš Gongol, SUO) and Lifelong Learning (Harm van Lieshout, Sofie Wiersma, Eelco van Es, HUAS). The objective of this conference is to provide a forum for exchange on new didactical developments and the challenges higher education teaching and learning are faced with.

Entrepreneurial Mindset Workshop Series (UMLP and SUO, 2027)

UMLP, in partnership with SUO, will run a **two-part workshop series** explicitly designed to get researchers thinking like entrepreneurs. The target group is primarily PhD candidates and postdoctoral researchers across all disciplines (with invitations extended alliance-wide). The objective of this workshop series is to equip researchers with the mindset and foresight to **amplify**

the impact of their work beyond academia. By the end of the series, participants should feel more confident in ideating applications for their research and navigating uncertainty about the future – key entrepreneurial competencies.

Part 1: "The Entrepreneurial Mindset – Turning Ideas into Action." This session will cover fundamentals of entrepreneurial thinking for researchers: recognizing opportunities in academic work, understanding the process of moving an idea from lab to market, and the personal mindset traits needed (initiative, resilience, risk-taking in a research context). Participants will hear case studies of research that led to startups or societal innovations and engage in exercises to reframe their own research ideas in terms of value propositions.

Part 2: "Futuring for Researchers – Explore What's Next." This session shifts focus to **futures thinking**. Researchers learn techniques to "future-proof" their ideas, scanning emerging trends and technologies that could impact their field. They will practice scenario planning: how might their research be applied in 5, 10, or 20 years, and what innovations (or new challenges) could arise? By anticipating different futures, researchers can identify **new research directions or entrepreneurial ventures**.

NINE Research Workshop (IPB, December 2025)

The **1st International Conference on Artistic Research and Design Methodologies** organized by **IPB** in December 2025 is envisioned as a space for critical reflection and transdisciplinary exchange, focusing on research practices in art and design while extending to disciplines such as architecture; curatorship and exhibition practices; literature and creative writing, among others.

It addresses broader contexts, questions, and methodologies with which these practices inevitably intersect and affirms the central role of art in knowledge production, understanding research as a process that interweaves thought and action, engaging not only aesthetics and technique but also cultural, social, ethical, and existential dimensions.

The conference welcomes researchers, artists, invited speakers, and students, both national and international, who engage with the proposed thematic areas to reflect collaboratively on the challenges and potential of practices that integrate reflection and practice.

STARS Day international conference (UAMD, Spring 2026)

The **UAMD** Faculty of Law will host an **International Conference** in May 2026 as part of **STARS Day**. Researchers, professors, and students from STARS EU partner universities will be invited. The goal of the conference is to promote intellectual exchange, show off best practices, and improve collaboration amongst universities. At least more than 50 professors and students are expected to take part; a Book of Abstracts will be published, and new research collaborations are expected to emerge.

Partner Institution Innovation Events

Several partners host **thematic innovation days or networking events** that will be opened to the STARS EU alliance or replicated in other regions. These include:

Innovative Therapies Days (UMLP, annual): An international symposium in Besançon bridging cutting-edge **medical research and industry**. Clinicians, scientists, and biotech industry partners present the latest progress in fields like CAR-T cell therapy, stem cells, and regenerative medicine, focusing on how to translate lab discoveries into clinical trials and eventually market treatments. The event (open to alliance members, especially those in health/life sciences) features an exhibitor village, B2B networking sessions, and discussions of real-world deployment challenges. This event exposes researchers to the full innovation pipeline in healthcare – **from research to market** – and encourages them to consider the commercial and societal implementation of scientific discoveries.

Le Connecteur (UMLP, annual): A networking forum in Besançon that brings together university labs and companies in the **health and tech sector**. Initially started within the FEMTO-ST research institute, this event showcases academic expertise (lab presentations) and fosters dialogue on collaboration opportunities with local med-tech and health companies. The goal is to inspire joint projects, e.g. under Horizon Europe or regional grants, by matching researchers with industry needs. In the future, UMLP plans to expand Le Connecteur to include other institutions and perhaps other sectors; STARS EU colleagues could be invited to observe or contribute, and similar "Connecteur" events can be emulated in other regions.

ICube Fair (UMLP, annual): An interdisciplinary research fair in the region of Bourgogne-Franche-Comté aimed at **sparking new collaborative projects**. Laboratories from three Graduate Schools (covering various disciplines) present their research and set up stands to present their expertise, capabilities, and any innovative tools or platforms they have. Co-working spaces are provided on-site for spontaneous brainstorming and to help teams form around emerging ideas. By facilitating informal scientific exchange, ICube helps identify interdisciplinary project ideas that can be developed into proposals for funding. STARS EU researchers can attend to network and possibly replicate this format to connect labs across different universities virtually or during alliance meetups.

Knowledge and Technology Transfer Fair (IPB, biennial): A fair hosted by IPB to **connect researchers with the local business community**. At this fair, IPB researchers with ongoing projects (e.g. prototypes, applied research outcomes, patents in progress) showcase their work to companies and innovation agencies. The aim is twofold: to **create employment and networking opportunities** for students and researchers, and to **spark knowledge/technology transfer deals or partnerships**. By involving STARS EU partners (for example, inviting startup support offices or notable projects from other regions to present), the fair can gain an international dimension and offer reciprocal opportunities (IPB researchers might join similar fairs in other regions). Working languages at the fair are Portuguese, Spanish, French and English.

Durrës Job fair (UAMD, May 2026): UAMD will collaborate with local businesses and the Durrës Municipality to organize a large job fair in April 2026, featuring businesses in the area and the Durrës Municipality. The event will connect students directly with jobs and encourage new ideas and businesses. More than 40 businesses are anticipated to take part, which will involve more than 400 students and create new job and internship opportunities.

These workshops and events ensure that **beyond formal courses, researchers have practical arenas to develop and apply entrepreneurial skills** – whether through pitching to industry, networking across disciplines, or brainstorming solutions to societal issues. They also highlight each region's unique innovation ecosystem while keeping doors open for alliance-wide participation.

Seminars and inspirational talks

To continuously **inspire and inform the STARS EU community,** the alliance will run seminar series and talks featuring entrepreneurs, alumni, and experts. These sessions, often virtual (webinars) but also local, serve to **motivate researchers** by showcasing success stories and sharing knowledge on innovation ecosystems.

Entrepreneurial and Alumni STARS Talks

A flagship set of webinars featuring **successful entrepreneurs and innovators** from within the STARS EU community (e.g. alumni who founded startups, professors who commercialized research, or notable regional entrepreneurs). These talks are open to all alliance members (students, staff, researchers) and are meant to **spark ideas and provide relatable role models**. These live webinars will include Q&A and be recorded for later viewing via the STARS EU website. The entrepreneurial and Alumni STARS talks aim to keep the conversation on entrepreneurship alive year-round and **allow researchers to learn from real experiences of peers** who have bridged academia and innovation.

For example, in **October 2025**, Martin Holi will speak on *"Challenges and Opportunities of Integrating STARS EU Activities into Local Research and Teaching"* – sharing how engaging in alliance projects benefited his own research/teaching and how others can do the same (target audience: faculty and project managers looking to embed alliance initiatives locally).

In **December 2025**, Jeroen Loef will present *"Regional Innovation Strategies and Perspectives on Inter-regionalisation"*, providing insight into how regions like those of STARS EU partners can collaborate on innovation (target audience: researchers and administrators interested in regional development and policy).

The STARS talk are expanding their target group to include members of the future regional workforce – alumnis. CUT is organizing the first edition of the Alumni Talks in **February 2026**, inviting Dr. **Stefan Życzkowski**, founder of **ASTOR** and a graduate of the **CUT**, to share his story about how he founded and developed what has become one of the leading automation businesses in Poland and in Europa.

Interdisciplinary "Vulnerabilities" Seminar (UMLP, 2026)

Marie and Louis Pasteur University will organize a thematic seminar on **"Vulnerabilities in the 21st Century"** to highlight cross-cutting challenges and the need for innovative solutions. This seminar targets a broad range of researchers and students across the alliance, particularly those in social sciences, public policy, environmental science, and health. The objective of this seminar will be to increase awareness of how vulnerabilities (environmental, societal, health, digital) interconnect; encourage **interdisciplinary dialogue** by having law, science, tech, humanities,

and policy perspectives in the same room; and spark collaboration on research-based solutions. The event frame includes an opening keynote ("Understanding Vulnerability in the 21st Century: A European Perspective"), four thematic panels (climate/environment, societal issues like migration and inequality, health crises, and digital/cyber vulnerabilities), followed by a roundtable on overlapping vulnerabilities. A closing session will draft an **"Alliance Statement on Vulnerability Research & Education"** and outline follow-up actions (e.g. joint research proposals, student exchange topics, interdisciplinary publications).

The seminar's goal is to encourage researchers to adopt a holistic, entrepreneurial mindset in addressing complex societal issues – seeing vulnerabilities not just as problems but as innovation opportunities requiring cross-sector collaboration. The seminar also strengthens network ties among thematic interest groups (TIGs) in the alliance dealing with related issues.

Local Innovation Ecosystem Seminars (each partner)

Each university in the alliance will organize at least one **seminar or guest talk on their regional innovation ecosystem**, inviting local industry or startup speakers. By sharing recordings or findings from these local seminars across the alliance, each university's local knowledge becomes a shared asset. The objective is to **increase awareness among researchers** of the support structures and innovation climate around them and share pedagogical innovations in entrepreneurship education.

For instance, IPB plans seminars on the **regional innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem** in Northern Portugal. These events (targeting students and staff locally, but open to interested alliance members online) will educate researchers on how to navigate resources like incubators, funding programs, patent support offices, etc., in their region.

Likewise, HSB will host a seminar in Spring 2026 on *"How to Integrate Challenge-Based Learning in Higher Education"* – primarily for educators and program coordinators, discussing methods to incorporate real challenges into coursework (with reflections on the benefits to student engagement and skill development).

Entrepreneurial Research Showcases

Task 4.2 recommends that the alliance initiate the **STARS EU Entrepreneurial Research Seminars**, a series dedicated to showcasing how research has successfully been turned into products, services, or startups. These seminars might feature, for example, a PhD graduate who founded a company based on their thesis, or a collaborative research project that led to a patent and licensing deal. The format could be a short presentation of the journey followed by a discussion on lessons learned (covering topics like IP, team building, and market challenges). By rotating presenters from different countries and disciplines, participants get a panorama of possibilities. The objective is to inspire current researchers by highlighting success stories and extracting practical insights (e.g., how to pitch an idea to investors, or how to decide between

publishing vs. patenting). This will normalize the idea of **research commercialization** and celebrate those who pursue entrepreneurial paths.

The first seminar will be held by **Dr Gwenaël Rolin from UMLP**. Dr. Rolin will present his work on developing biomaterials for tissue regeneration, focusing on the inflammatory and mechanical mechanisms of keloid fibrosis formation. This seminar will explore the cutting-edge intersection of biomaterials science and tissue regeneration, with a special focus on the complex processes underlying keloid fibrosis. Keloids—raised, fibrous scars that extend beyond the original wound—pose significant clinical challenges due to their resistance to conventional therapies and their impact on patients' quality of life.

Research, innovation and entrepreneurship support mechanisms

Developing the entrepreneurial mindset in researchers also requires empowering the **educators, support staff, and structures** that guide them. The following actions focus on building capacity among staff and creating supportive frameworks for innovation.

STARS EU Seed Grant fund

The alliance is implementing a **Seed Grant fund** for the year 2025-2026 and will evaluate whether this program is continued. The Seed Grant fund encourages cross-university teams to develop **joint project proposals** for external funding. Small grants (e.g. €2,000–€3,000 per participating university) are awarded on a competitive basis to teams of researchers from at least three STARS EU institutions, to help them prepare larger proposals (Horizon Europe, Erasmus+, MSCA, etc).

The Seed Grant fund target group is primarily early- to mid-career researchers, including postdocs and new faculty members, who need support to kickstart collaboration. The grant can be used for travel to meet partners or hiring a proposal writer. The objective is to **generate an increase in joint funding applications and innovative research ideas** that cross regions and disciplines – essentially planting the seeds for the next breakthroughs and startups to come out of STARS EU.

Shared research, innovation and entrepreneurship infrastructure access

To leverage the alliance's collective assets, STARS EU will implement a policy for **mutual access to laboratories, equipment, and data platforms** across partner universities. A centralized inventory (building on the STARS EU **Catalogue of Services,** and the work of tasks T2.2, T4.3 and T5.2) will list major research facilities and innovation platforms at each institution, which alliance researchers can request to use. For example, a Hanze researcher could access a specialized materials analysis lab at CUT for a joint project, or a CUT PhD student could perform experiments in HSB's prototyping workshop.

The target group of this catalogue is researchers and technical staff in need of equipment or facilities not available at their home institution. To facilitate this, STARS EU will study the feasibility of a streamlined process to handle cross-institution lab usage, and encourage technical staff exchanges to share expertise. Moreover, the catalogue aims to encourage partnerships between external stakeholders and academia members by opening the catalogue and defining the accessibility of the infrastructure to regional stakeholders.

The catalogue also includes structures which support entrepreneurship, which could be internal or external to the STARS EU partner university. For example, **ULL** lists **ARN – Innova** which and strengthens entrepreneurship in the Arona municipality, while fostering the development of entrepreneurs, improving business specialization and qualifications, and generating meetings and spaces of interest. Another instance is **Innovatum** from **HV's** region, a Science Park funded by Region Västra Götaland, which helps companies, academia and society to meet, collaborate and develop sustainable innovations. **Innovatum** supports start-ups, runs development projects, business networks and test and demo environment.

The objective of this endeavor is to **boost the quality and entrepreneurial potential of research** by making sure resource limitations at one campus don't stop a good idea – any researcher in the alliance can tap into the wider network's infrastructure to prototype or test innovative concepts.

STARS EU Mentoring Programme for young and emerging researchers

It is recommended for the STARS EU alliance to establish a **Mentoring Programme for young and emerging researchers** offering mentorship and mobility fellowships for PhD candidates and postdoctoral researchers across the alliance. This could take the form of an MSCA COFUND program or a MSCA Doctoral Network application (leveraging Task 3.4 on STARS EU Doctoral programmes and Task 4.4 on Supporting STARS EU research communities). The Programme could pair early-career researchers with experienced mentors (including entrepreneurs in residence or industry mentors where possible) to guide their career and venture ideas. Research visits to other STARS EU labs or to industry partners in a STARS EU partner's region could be funded through the MSCA project to expose young researchers to different environments and to cultivate international co-mentorship on projects.

The goal of this Mentoring Programme would be to create a generation of **international, innovation-minded researchers** who have both a strong academic foundation and practical experience in applying research beyond their own lab, with a support system that spans the STARS EU alliance.

Teaching and Learning Community on Entrepreneurship

In partnership with WP3's Task 3.7, STARS EU will form a community of practice for educators and mentors focused on entrepreneurship and innovation in research training. A key element of this will be integrating **Hanze's "Greenhouse Entrepreneurship Approach"** as a guiding framework. The Greenhouse approach is a dynamic ecosystem (both physical and cultural) designed to **nurture entrepreneurial growth** among learners. It draws on a knowledge-creation cycle (the SECI model of Socialization, Externalization, Combination, Internalization) to move ideas from tacit brainstorming to tangible solutions. The framework emphasizes four pillars – **Mindset, Product, Process, and Person** – meaning it develops the individual's entrepreneurial attitude,

guides them through iterative project development, and focuses on creating real products/services in a supportive team environment.

Hanze will lead training sessions for faculty and support staff from all partners on how to apply the Greenhouse approach in their teaching or incubation activities. This could involve sharing tools like the **Growth Stage Canvas** (a roadmap for projects from germination to scaling) and **Challenge Framing Canvas** (aligning stakeholder needs with student projects) and **practicing facilitation of "Mindset Circles"** (where students reflect on failures and resilience). Each university can then establish its own “Greenhouse Hub” – a dedicated space or program where interdisciplinary teams of students and researchers work on challenge-based projects following the Greenhouse phases (Germination → Growth → Scaling → Transplantation). Over the two years, the community will meet (virtually) to share experiences, refine methodologies, and ensure the approach is adapted to each regional context.

By the end of the project, all partners will have educators proficient in this **evidence-based entrepreneurship education approach**, leading to sustainable institutional capacity. Researchers going through Greenhouse-inspired programs should emerge with a stronger entrepreneurial agency, the ability to iterate ideas, and confidence as innovators. Institutionally, this will result in embedded “greenhouse” ecosystems and a common language for fostering innovation across STARS EU.

Ecosystem engagement

To truly develop entrepreneurial researchers, STARS EU must actively engage the ecosystems around partner universities – industry, startups, governments, and society. These actions strengthen those external links and ensure that research and innovation activities are grounded in real-world needs.

STARS EU Living Labs and FutureLab

The alliance capitalizes Living Labs as open innovation environments rallying interregional stakeholders (quintuple helix) around challenges, issues and needs, to transform them into training and/or research projects. Led by WP2 – Regional Transition Accelerator, Living Labs are disciplinary or transdisciplinary and aim to **bridge the gap between academia and external stakeholders**. Identified challenges can serve as a basis for challenge-based learning experiences such as the STARS EU Future Lab, in which regional stakeholders give challenges to groups of interregional students, to work on for an entire semester.

Each STARS EU Living Lab is led by one of the partner universities for organizational purposes, but all Living Labs are interregional and thus include all types of stakeholders from all partner regions. Many STARS EU partner universities have already set up a (trans)disciplinary Living Lab: NEXUS4FUTURE (transdisciplinary, IPB); OU(TE)R CAMPUS (Living spaces, HSB); Energy Transition (UMLP); Production Technology (Sustainable industry, HV); Entrepreneurship and Innovation (SUO); STARS Health (Healthy ageing Hanze); PKSTARSEU Living Lab (Creative industry and leisure, PK). All members of the STARS EU community (internal and external stakeholders) are invited to participate in the Living Lab that sparks interest.

The goal of STARS EU Living Labs and FutureLab is to engage researchers in user-centric innovation, breaking down the walls between academia and society, and increasing the relevance and uptake of research outcomes. Empower students to work on real regional challenges hands-on.

Regional stakeholder involvement

Each region will intensify efforts to involve local stakeholders in alliance initiatives, with coordination by WP2. Regular **stakeholder meetups** are organized in the regions of STARS EU partner universities, where university researchers informally meet business leaders, startup founders, regional authorities, etc., to discuss innovation ideas and collaboration. These meetups (organized in the format of breakfasts, lunches, afterworks, etc...) help building trust and personal connections, often the seed for future partnerships like sponsored research or joint ventures.

Moreover, STARS EU partners are encouraged to host **policy and innovation roundtables** in the context of the work led by T2.4 to engage policymakers in dialogue with researchers. These

roundtables would allow researchers to showcase innovation projects to regional or EU-level policymakers and align them with regional innovation strategies (smart specialization areas), potentially influencing supportive policies or obtaining patronage.

The objective of regional stakeholder involvement actions is to create a **vibrant interface between the alliance and its regions**, so that researchers have pathways to test and implement their ideas locally, and external stakeholders see the universities as go-to sources of innovation.

Joint project development

STARS EU proactively seeks new **external funding projects** to continue and expand entrepreneurship support. The objective is to ensure the continuity and scaling-up of alliance entrepreneurship initiatives through additional funding streams and integrate STARS EU into Europe's broader innovation landscape.

A concrete step is preparing an **"Alliances for Innovation"** proposal (Erasmus+) tentatively called **ALL4Inn**, uniting the alliance on the theme of accelerating entrepreneurship and innovation in our regions. This proposal, spearheaded by the Entrepreneurship & Innovation TIG and WP2 – Regional Transition Accelerator, will leverage the experiences of this action plan to secure funding for follow-up activities (such as an alliance-wide incubator, extended mobility funding, etc.).

Some STARS EU partners are involved in the **BECEE project** – this kind of initiative (though not detailed here) exemplifies the collaborative proposals the alliance aims to generate.

Partners are encouraged to also co-develop projects with relevant **EIT KICs** (Knowledge and Innovation Communities), industry clusters, and **Horizon Europe missions** to embed STARS EU researchers in European innovation networks.

T4.2 recommends the creation of a dedicated **STARS EU Project development team** to spearhead the development of joint projects within the alliance, therefore ensuring the continuity of entrepreneurship and innovation initiatives and the sustainable funding of alliance actions.

Communication and visibility

To support all the above actions, a strong communication effort is needed so that researchers know about opportunities and that successes are celebrated.

#STARSEntrepreneurship Campaign

With the help of the alliance's communications work package WP8, STARS EU is encouraged to launch a dedicated social media campaign using the hashtag **#STARSEntrepreneurship**. Over the two years, this campaign will share stories of student and researcher entrepreneurs, promote upcoming training events (like MOOCs deadlines, competition calls, STARS talks series), and highlight each partner's entrepreneurial ecosystem. By using a common hashtag and a coordinated content calendar, STARS EU will increase the alliance's visibility and create a sense of community online. Each partner's social media channels should participate, ensuring multi-language outreach. The goal is to raise awareness among the alliance community (and external followers) about the entrepreneurial mindset initiative and encourage higher participation in the programs offered.

"STARS EU Innovators" Success Story Videos

STARS EU is encouraged to produce a series of short videos profiling **success stories** – the "STARS EU Innovators" – featuring individuals or teams from partner universities who exemplify entrepreneurial mindset and innovation. For example, a video might tell the story of a PhD student who started a company, or a collaborative project that solved a community problem. These videos will be shared on the STARS EU website and social media and screened at events. Not only do they serve as inspiration, but they also function as educational case studies that can be shown in entrepreneurship courses or workshops. By the end of the project, the goal is to have a rich library of role models that resonate with researchers (ideally at least one story per partner), thereby normalizing the idea of researchers as innovators.

Conclusion: outcomes and outlooks

Expected outcomes (by October 2027)

By the conclusion of the current STARS EU project period, the alliance anticipates significant progress toward an entrepreneurial research culture. Key expected outcomes include:

Teaching and Learning Community on Entrepreneurship: An active alliance-wide community of practice on entrepreneurship and innovation, comprised of educators, researchers, and students who regularly share insights and support each other's initiatives.

STARS EU Joint Curricula: A fully populated **Joint Curricula Catalogue** of training offerings in innovation and entrepreneurship, used by the STARS EU community to upskill themselves, including Challenge-based learning activities, MOOCs and/or micro-credentials co-branded by the alliance.

Annual innovation events (joint and local): Institutionalized alliance-wide or localized events ensuring continued collaboration and exchange among partners on innovation and entrepreneurship objectives and challenges.

Stronger partnerships: Strengthened regional and interregional partnerships, evidenced by new collaborations with quintuple-helix stakeholders around innovation and entrepreneurship.

Changed perception of the universities in their regions: With the number of researchers and staff members skilled in entrepreneurial methods, their engagement in the regions – especially in relation to regional stakeholders – is expected to rise. This is expected to contribute to an evolved perception as strong actors in their regional innovation ecosystems.

Cultural shift: Perhaps less quantifiable but crucial – a cultural shift where researchers across STARS EU embrace an entrepreneurial mindset, meaning they proactively seek to apply their work for societal/economic benefit and feel equipped to do so.

These outcomes will set the stage for even more ambitious efforts in the future, embedding the entrepreneurial mindset as a defining element of the STARS EU identity. In the long term, the envisioned cultural shift will contribute to the competitiveness of all STARS EU regions.

Outlook: Post-2027 recommendations

Looking beyond the current two-year plan, we envision a sustained trajectory of growth for entrepreneurial capacity in the alliance. Some recommendations for the next phase of STARS EU (after 2027) include:

Deep-Dive Innovation Sprints: Organize intensive "innovation sprints" focused on key strategic industries like AI, GreenTech, or HealthTech, bringing together interdisciplinary teams from all partners for rapid solution development (could be an evolution of the FutureLab/competition format).

Interdisciplinary Summer School: Launch a recurring summer school that combines entrepreneurship training with work on pressing **societal challenges**, attracting a mix of students, researchers, and external partners to collaborate over several weeks.

Alliance incubator and Spin-off support: Establish a **STARS EU incubator network** to support venture creation emerging from our universities. This might include shared virtual incubator services and a fund or program to help spin off promising research into startups.

Demo Days and festivals: Host an alliance-wide **Demo Day** where top projects, startups, or prototypes from each university are showcased to investors and industry representatives, rotating annually among campuses. Similarly, consider a **STARS EU Entrepreneurship Festival** – a multi-day event featuring startup pitches, innovation talks, and networking – as a flagship celebration of entrepreneurial culture.

Ecosystem Open Days: Coordinate an **Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Open Day** at each university where local startups, incubators, and innovation agencies set up info booths on campus and researchers can discover resources and opportunities (synchronized alliance-wide to amplify publicity).

Increased Startups & Participation: A measurable increase in startup creation by students/researchers, higher participation rates in entrepreneurship programs, and more interdisciplinary teams working on innovation challenges.

By pursuing these future initiatives, the STARS EU Alliance can further solidify its role as a **breeding ground for entrepreneurial talent** and ensure that the momentum built in 2023–2027 continues well into the next stages of European collaboration.