

RehAllianCE Joint Solution: The RehAllianCE Acceleration Manual

Joint development of solutions based on results of transnational
pilot and regional living labs pilots

The RehAllianCE Acceleration Manual

A transferable methodology for organisations supporting rehabilitation SMEs

The RehAllianCE Joint Solution is the transferable project output developed from the transnational pilot results.

The *RehAllianCE Acceleration Manual* is the operational form of this Joint Solution. It provides a practical methodology for organisations that support rehabilitation SMEs, helping them assess company needs, select suitable support services and translate validation or market-orientation results into concrete next steps. The manual is intended primarily for organisations involved in innovation support, including business support organisations, digital innovation hubs, living labs, research and technology organisations, universities, healthcare providers, innovation clusters and public authorities responsible for innovation, health or regional development.

Why the RehAllianCE Acceleration Manual

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RehAllianCE addresses a common challenge in rehabilitation innovation ecosystems across Central Europe (CE): many SMEs developing promising rehabilitation technologies struggle to move from product development to successful market uptake. Limited access to validation environments, fragmented support services, regulatory complexity and insufficient collaboration between innovation actors often slow down the commercialisation of new solutions and reduce their impact on healthcare systems.

The RehAllianCE Joint Solution is the *RehAllianCE Acceleration Manual*, a transferable methodology for support organisations that help SMEs develop, validate and prepare innovative rehabilitation solutions for market uptake. It translates the experience and evidence generated through the RehAllianCE transnational pilot into a practical support pathway that can also be applied beyond the project partnership. The manual is designed for organisations that provide innovation support to rehabilitation SMEs, including business support organisations, digital innovation hubs, living labs, research institutions, clusters and public authorities (see page 5/ Introduction for the full target group). It guides these support organisations through four connected modules.

The methodology was developed and refined on the basis of eight transnational SME support cases involving companies from five CE countries. These cases covered different rehabilitation-related solution types and maturity levels. The pilot showed that effective SME support requires more than isolated services. Rehabilitation innovations need a combination of technical validation, user-centred feedback, market and regulatory orientation, business perspective and ecosystem cooperation.



Match & Assess helps clarify the SME's maturity level, support needs, expected outcomes and suitable service pathway.



Validate supports test-before-invest activities in realistic environments, including usability testing, user feedback and rehabilitation-specific validation.



Orient helps SMEs understand market conditions, regulatory and reimbursement questions, competitive positioning and relevant ecosystem actors.



Anchor & Scale supports the preparation of implementation, financing, procurement, partnerships and long-term uptake in healthcare or rehabilitation settings.

The added value of the *RehAllianCE Acceleration Manual* lies in its practical and modular structure. It does not prescribe one fixed acceleration programme. Instead, it enables support organisations to select the right assistance according to the SME's actual development stage and main barrier. Each support activity concludes with an SME-specific action plan that turns findings into clear next steps.

Transferable to different regional innovation ecosystems

The *RehAllianCE Acceleration Manual* is transferable to different regional innovation ecosystems. Support organisations can adapt individual services to their available infrastructure, expertise and healthcare context while keeping the common logic of structured assessment, targeted support and action-oriented follow-up. In this way, the Joint Solution helps strengthen innovation support capacities, improve cooperation between healthcare, research and business actors, and facilitate the uptake of innovative rehabilitation solutions across CE. The long-term use of the Joint Solution will be supported through the RehAllianCE Competence Centre, where the manual can remain accessible as a knowledge-transfer and orientation resource. Building on the pilot, selected elements of the methodology are operationalised through the Competence Centre structure and the Matching Platform, especially thematic guidance, profile-based matching and access to relevant expertise, services and cooperation partners.

8

transnational SME
support cases

5

Central European
countries

4

connected support
modules

What is the RehAllianCE Joint Solution?

The RehAllianCE Joint Solution is the *RehAllianCE Acceleration Manual*: a transferable methodology for organisations supporting SMEs in the development, validation and market uptake of innovative rehabilitation solutions. The Joint Solution addresses a challenge identified across the RehAllianCE partnership. Many SMEs developing rehabilitation technologies, digital health applications, assistive devices, robotics, wearables, artificial intelligence applications or other MedTech solutions show strong innovation potential but face similar barriers when moving towards implementation and commercialisation. These barriers include limited access to validation environments, fragmented support services, regulatory and reimbursement uncertainty, insufficient involvement of end users and healthcare professionals and difficulties in identifying suitable partners for testing, implementation and market entry.

The *RehAllianCE Acceleration Manual* translates the experience gained during the transnational pilot into a structured but flexible support methodology. It helps implementing organisations assess SME needs, select suitable support services, coordinate relevant expertise and translate support results into concrete next steps. The manual does not prescribe one fixed acceleration programme. Instead, it provides a modular approach that can be adapted to different regional contexts, available infrastructures and SME maturity levels.

What is the RehAllianCE Joint Solution?

RehAllianCE

The manual is intended primarily for organisations involved in innovation support, including business support organisations, digital innovation hubs, living labs, research and technology organisations, universities, healthcare providers, innovation clusters and public authorities responsible for innovation, health or regional development. SMEs can also use the manual as a reference to better understand which type of support may be useful at different stages of technology development, validation and market preparation.

The methodology is organised around four connected support elements **Match & Assess**, **Validate**, **Orient** and **Anchor & Scale**. Together, these elements help organisations move from general innovation support to SME-specific action planning. Each support activity concludes with a concrete action plan.

The *RehAllianCE Acceleration Manual* does not replace specialised legal, regulatory, clinical or reimbursement advice. Its purpose is to provide a practical methodology for identifying support needs, matching SMEs with suitable services and translating support results into actionable next steps.

A key characteristic of the Joint Solution is its transferability. Organisations do not need to replicate the exact services delivered during the RehAllianCE pilot. They can adapt the manual to their own regional capacities while keeping the same overall logic introduced above. This makes the methodology applicable beyond the original project partnership. After the project, the *RehAllianCE Acceleration Manual* can be used within the Competence Centre as a knowledge-transfer and orientation resource for organisations supporting rehabilitation SMEs. At the same time, selected elements of the methodology are operationalised through the Competence Centre structure and the Matching Platform, especially thematic guidance, profile-based matching and access to relevant expertise, services and cooperation partners.

Four connected support elements

**Match & Assess****Validate****Orient****Anchor & Scale**

Entry point → support modules → SME-specific action plan (chapter 3)

From pilot evidence to methodology

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The *RehAllianCE Acceleration Manual* is not a theoretical concept. It is based on evidence generated through the project's transnational pilot action. Complementary support services were tested with SMEs developing rehabilitation technologies and related MedTech solutions across CE.

The pilot involved eight SMEs from five CE countries. Their solutions covered different rehabilitation-related technology fields, including digital health applications, robotics, wearables, assistive devices, telemetric tools and rehabilitation platforms. The participating SMEs also differed in maturity level, ranging from prototype stage to market-ready or already commercially available solutions. This made it possible to identify support needs across different stages of the innovation pathway.

The pilot tested three complementary types of support:



PBN provided product validation in smart-home and senior-oriented testing environments, combining practical testing with user feedback and emotional response analysis.



CUAS provided Living lab pre-acceptance evaluation and rehabilitation use-case validation, combining technical assessment with user-centred and rehabilitation-specific perspectives.



NSB provided market and regulatory assessment, competitive landscape analysis and stakeholder and ecosystem mapping to support commercialisation and internationalisation planning.

Together, these services generated evidence in three main areas: technical and usability validation, user acceptance and market readiness. The pilot showed that SMEs benefit most when support is not delivered as isolated advice, but matched to their product maturity, development needs and expected next steps.

Three lessons were particularly relevant for the development of the manual.

- **Validation should take place before larger investment decisions.** Testing in realistic or near-realistic environments can reveal usability barriers, workflow issues, technical limitations and user acceptance challenges before SMEs move into more resource-intensive steps such as certification, clinical validation, market entry or scaling.
- **Market and regulatory orientation should be connected to validation.** Technical readiness alone does not ensure successful market uptake. SMEs also need to understand market conditions, regulatory and reimbursement questions, competitive positioning and relevant ecosystem actors before making commercialisation or internationalisation decisions.
- **Support must be tailored to the maturity and needs of each SME.** The pilot involved companies with different technologies, readiness levels and business objectives. This confirmed the need for a structured entry assessment that clarifies the SME's starting point and identifies the most suitable combination of support services.

These lessons were translated into the structure of the *RehAllianCE Acceleration Manual*. The methodology starts with **Match & Assess**, because the pilot showed the importance of clarifying SME needs and expectations before selecting a service. It then organises support through **Validate**, **Orient** and **Anchor & Scale**, reflecting the need to combine practical testing, market and regulatory orientation and implementation planning. The pilot provides the practical basis for the manual, showing how transnational support services can be converted into a transferable methodology from product development towards market readiness and sustainable uptake.

Example services from the transnational pilot

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	IDEA CONCEPT	IMPLEMENTATION EVALUATION	PRODUCTION ANCHORING
TARGET	Understand the challenge, stakeholder needs and solution logic	Test the solution in practice, collect feedback and adapt	Prepare routine use, market uptake, sustainability and reimbursement
SME NEED ADDRESSED	Early-stage technology validation and test-before-invest needs	Technology pre-evaluation, test-before-invest and rehabilitation-specific validation	Market orientation, standards and regulation support and internationalization planning
KEY LEARNING	Real-user testing helps SMEs identify usability barriers, refine product design and reduce development risks before larger investments	Technical performance and user experience need to be assessed together, since usability issues can directly influence measured outcomes and acceptance	Structured market and regulatory intelligence reduce uncertainty and supports strategic decision-making, especially for more mature SMEs preparing to enter new markets
	EARLY VALIDATION	USE-CASE VALIDATION	MARKET PREPARATION
SERVICE	Smart-home product validation & UX analysis	Living Lab validation & rehabilitation use-case testing	Market, regulatory & ecosystem orientation
MAIN METHODS	• Smart home testing • Senior-oriented testing • Emotional / cognitive analysis • User feedback analysis	• Living lab pre-acceptance evaluation • Technical testing • Usability assessment • Feedback from users / experts	• Market assessment • Regulatory assessment • Competitive landscape analysis • Partnership / ecosystem analysis

The figure shows how the services tested by PBN, CUAS and NSB can be positioned along typical rehabilitation product development phases. They illustrate possible service types that organisations may build or combine within the manual, including validation, user feedback, market and regulatory orientation and partnership analysis. The services are examples from the pilot and do not need to be replicated exactly; other organisations can adapt the same support logic to their own expertise, infrastructure and regional ecosystem.

The RehAllianCE Acceleration Manual

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The *RehAllianCE Acceleration Manual* is the practical methodology of the RehAllianCE Joint Solution. It helps organisations supporting rehabilitation SMEs identify the right support need, select a suitable support module and translate the results into concrete next steps. The manual is designed for the innovation support organisations including business support organisations, digital innovation hubs, living labs, research institutions, healthcare innovation centres, clusters, testing facilities and regional authorities. It can be used to structure support for SMEs developing rehabilitation technologies, digital health solutions, assistive devices, robotics, wearables or related MedTech solutions.

Rehabilitation innovation cannot be accelerated through business mentoring alone. Before a solution can be adopted in healthcare or rehabilitation settings, it usually needs to address technical performance, user acceptance, clinical relevance, regulatory conditions, reimbursement, financing, workflow integration and market access. The manual therefore combines validation, market orientation and implementation planning in one practical support pathway.

The manual does not assume that every SME needs the same support. It provides a structured way to identify the SME's starting point and select the most useful next step. On page 9 the entire SME-oriented support pathway of the *RehAllianCE Acceleration Manual* is illustrated.. The individual support measures are described in detail in the following sections. This process is not necessarily linear. Depending on the SME's maturity level and main barrier, organisations may apply one module or combine several modules. For example, an SME may first need validation of usability and user acceptance, then market and regulatory orientation, followed by an implementation roadmap for healthcare adoption.

The manual follows three product development phases¹

SERVICES ALONG THE REHAB PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT PHASES



1 Idea | Concept

Understand the challenge, stakeholder needs and solution logic



2 Implementation | Evaluation

Test the solution in practice, collect feedback and adapt



3 Production | Anchoring

Prepare routine use, market uptake, sustainability and reimbursement

¹ Oberzaucher, Johannes. 2023. Umsetzung und Herausforderungen im Projektbereich „Digitalisierung von Pflegeprozessen“. IARA-Forschungskolloquium. 13.12.2023. [online, 4.4.2024] <https://www.iara.ac.at/forschungskolloquium-team-13122023/#>

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The RehAllianCE Acceleration Manual for SME support



Prepare the regional support offer

Build the regional preparatory basis:



service providers



testing environments



expert capacities



service descriptions



Match & Assess

Match: connect SME needs with suitable expertise and support

Assess: check readiness, maturity and current development phase



Result: support profile showing the current phase, key challenge and most suitable next step.



Support modules along the pathway

1 Idea | Concept



Validate

Test usability, functionality, user acceptance and rehabilitation fit before larger investment.

Typical output: validation findings



Orient

Clarify market, regulation, reimbursement and ecosystem conditions.

Typical output: market and regulatory orientation



Anchor & Scale

Prepare adoption, implementation, financing and long-term use.

Typical output: implementation roadmap

Flexible pathway: not every SME needs all modules. Modules can be used individually or combined depending on SME needs and maturity level.



SME-specific action plan

Output of each support activity



what was learned



remaining barriers



next steps



who should be involved



resources required

Builds on the pilot practice of documenting results so SMEs can continue implementation.

The transferable element is the methodology: assess needs, map services, match SMEs with the right support and translate results into action-oriented next steps. Services can be adapted to each region.

Match & Assess

Every support process should start with Match & Assess. This step is the practical entry point of the *RehAllianCE Acceleration Manual*. It ensures that SME needs are not matched with a generic service catalogue, but with the most suitable expertise, testing environment and support module.

Match & Assess has two sides:

- The implementing organisation maps the available support offer. This includes the service providers, testing facilities, Living Labs, healthcare or rehabilitation experts, market and regulatory experts, business support actors and other partners that can contribute to the support process.
- The SME assessment: This includes the technology, intended rehabilitation use case, target users, development phase, existing evidence, market readiness, regulatory assumptions, financing needs and expected outcome of the support activity.

The purpose of Match & Assess is to connect these two sides. An SME should only be directed to a service if the service fits its actual maturity level, main barrier and expected next step. For transferability, support organisations that want to implement the manual should therefore first prepare a clear overview of their own support ecosystem. The overview of the support ecosystem should define:

- Available service providers and testing or validation environments
- Expertise for market, regulatory, reimbursement, financing and implementation topics
- Offered services and the product development phases they support
- Required SME inputs, expected outputs, service limitations and potential next steps.

Based on this assessment, SMEs can be matched with suitable support modules:

- **Validate**, for testing, usability feedback, user acceptance analysis and rehabilitation-specific validation
- **Orient**, for market, regulatory, reimbursement, competitor and stakeholder insights
- **Anchor & Scale**, for implementation planning, procurement readiness, financing guidance, partnership development and long-term adoption support.

The result of Match & Assess should be a short SME support profile and a service brief. These documents should clarify the SME's main challenge, the selected support module, the responsible service provider, the expected output and the next step after the support activity. Within the RehAllianCE Competence Centre, the **Match & Assess** logic is reflected in a simplified way through the Matching Platform. Registered organisations provide information on their focus areas, capacities and partnership interests, which supports profile-based matching. The platform does not replace the full SME Needs & Readiness Check but can serve as an operational entry point for further needs analysis and follow-up.

What does another organisation need for Match & Assess?

Organisations do not need to replicate the exact RehAllianCE pilot services to use the *RehAllianCE Acceleration Manual*. The transferable element is the matching methodology. To implement the approach, an organisation needs:

- a process for identifying and onboarding SMEs
- an overview of available service providers and support offers
- access to relevant testing, validation or expert environments
- clear service descriptions and matching criteria
- documented outputs, such as a support profile, service result and action plan

This enables adaptation to different regional ecosystems while maintaining the same practical logic: assess → match → support → translate results into action

Support modules along the Manual

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After Match & Assess, the SME can be directed towards one or more support modules. The modules are not individual services. They are service categories that help support organisations group their available support offers in a clear and comparable way. The three support modules are:

**Validate (page 12)****Orient (page 13)****Anchor & Scale
(page 14)**

Together, these support modules translate the lessons from the transnational pilot into a practical and transferable methodology. Typical outputs help make the support modules reproducible across different regional contexts:

- **Validate:** Validation findings, usability feedback, user acceptance insights, technical or workflow improvement recommendations and indications of further testing or clinical validation needs.
- **Orient:** Market orientation summary, regulatory and reimbursement question list, competitor overview, stakeholder or partner map and market-entry priorities.
- **Anchor & Scale:** Implementation roadmap, procurement or reimbursement follow-up questions, partnership needs, financing priorities, training requirements and monitoring indicators for uptake.

Within the RehAllianCE Competence Centre these modules are supported through its thematic areas. Technology adoption and acceptance contributes to **Validate**. Market analysis as well as regulation and reimbursement support **Orient**. Funding, networking, procurement-related orientation and training contribute to **Anchor & Scale**. The *RehAllianCE Acceleration Manual* categories should therefore be understood as a methodological reference.

How can services be grouped in another region?

The support modules are not fixed services. They are categories that help organisations structure their own support offer in a clear and comparable way. An implementing organisation can group its services as follows:

- **Validate:** services involving testing, user feedback, usability assessment or real-life environments
- **Orient:** services involving markets, regulation, reimbursement, competition or stakeholders
- **Anchor & Scale:** services involving implementation, financing, procurement, partnerships or long-term uptake

This makes regional service offers easier to compare and easier to match with SME needs. The concrete services may differ between regions, but each service should lead to a documented result, such as validation findings, market orientation results, implementation recommendations or follow-up needs

Validate: testing before larger investment

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The **Validate module** helps SMEs test whether their solution works in practice and how users respond to it. It is especially useful when an SME needs feedback before investing in certification, clinical validation, market entry or scaling. Validation can take place in realistic or near-realistic environments, such as living labs, smart-home environments, rehabilitation facilities, laboratories or other user-centred test settings. The aim is not only to check technical functionality, but also to understand usability, user acceptance, workflow fit and rehabilitation relevance.

When to use this module: Use Validate when the SME needs to understand whether

- the product is usable and understandable for target users
- technical limitations or interaction problems exist
- users, patients, therapists or other stakeholders accept the solution
- further product refinement is needed before the next development step.

What the implementing organisation should do:

The support provider should define the testing setting, target users, test protocol, feedback method and documentation format. Depending on available infrastructure, validation may include usability testing, user-centred evaluation, technical pre-validation, rehabilitation use-case assessment, emotional response or user experience analysis, feedback sessions with users, therapists or healthcare professionals. The validation process should be clearly explained to the SME before testing starts. The SME should understand what will be tested, who will be involved, what kind of feedback will be collected and what output will be delivered.



USE CASE BOX | VALIDATE

AR-based neurological assessment in a smart senior environment

SME



SERVICE PROVIDER



SUPPORT MODULE

Module A Validation Service

- A.1 Product validation in real test environments
- A.2 Emotional analysis (Electroencephalography, facial emotion recognition, respiratory monitoring)
- A.3 User feedback analysis and user experience (UX) improvement

CHALLENGE

The SME needed user-centred validation of an AR-based neurological assessment tool before moving towards clinical validation and market preparation.

SUPPORT PROVIDED

Solution was tested in a smart senior environment with older users and younger adults. The validation combined practical testing, structured user feedback, emotional response analysis and UX assessment.

OUTPUT FOR THE SME

The SME received concrete feedback on usability, onboarding needs, interaction issues and product readiness. The results helped identify targeted improvements before further clinical validation and commercialisation steps.

TRANSFERABLE LESSON FOR THE MANUAL

Early test-before-invest validation helps SMEs identify usability barriers and interaction problems before entering more resource-intensive development steps. Combining technical testing with user feedback and emotional response analysis can provide a broader picture of product readiness.

Orient: understanding market, regulation and ecosystem conditions



USE CASE BOX | VALIDATE

Wearable-based digital rehabilitation and remote monitoring

SME



SERVICE PROVIDER



SUPPORT MODULE

Living Lab Pre-Acceptance Evaluation and Rehabilitation Use-Case Validation

- B.1.2 Acceptance and Usage Analysis
- Rehabilitation Use-Case validation:
- B.3.1 UX Analysis AND B.3.2 Domain Specific Focus Group

CHALLENGE

The SME needed to assess whether a wearable-based digital health solution could be suitable for rehabilitation and preventive care contexts, especially with regard to usability, acceptance and real-world monitoring potential.

SUPPORT PROVIDED

The service combined technical validation with user experience assessment. Physiological and activity-related parameters were compared with reference systems, while structured user feedback helped assess usability, perceived value and practical relevance for rehabilitation-related use cases.

OUTPUT FOR THE SME

SME received validation findings on technical performance, usability, acceptance and rehabilitation fit. Results supported refinement of platform and service model for active assisted living and remote care.

TRANSFERABLE LESSON FOR THE MANUAL

Rehabilitation technologies should be tested not only for technical performance, but also for usability, perceived value and fit with realistic rehabilitation scenarios. This helps SMEs understand whether a solution is ready for further development, adaptation or deployment.

The **Orient module** helps SMEs understand the external conditions for commercialisation and internationalisation. It is especially relevant when a solution has already reached a certain level of technical maturity, but the SME needs more clarity on market access, regulatory requirements, reimbursement, procurement or relevant stakeholders. The Orient module does not replace specialised legal, regulatory or reimbursement advice. Instead, it helps SMEs identify relevant questions, barriers and next steps before making advanced market-entry decisions.

When to use this module: Use Orient when the SME needs to understand

- which markets or countries are most relevant
- which regulatory or reimbursement questions need further clarification
- how competitors and alternative solutions are positioned
- which healthcare providers, partners, payers, clusters or public actors are relevant
- which barriers may affect market entry or internationalisation.

What the implementing organisation should do

The support provider should define the market or country focus together with the SME. The analysis should be limited enough to remain useful and concrete. It may include market assessment, regulatory orientation, reimbursement screening, competitor analysis, stakeholder mapping, identification of potential cooperation partners or comparison of selected healthcare or rehabilitation systems. The aim is to give the SME a clearer understanding of the environment in which the solution should be implemented or commercialised.

Anchor & Scale: preparing sustainable implementation



USE CASE BOX | ORIENT

Market and regulatory orientation for cardiac telerehabilitation



SERVICE PROVIDER



SUPPORT MODULE

Module C Consulting Services

- Market and regulatory assessment
- Competitive landscape analysis
- Technology and industry partnership analysis
- Stakeholder mapping and country comparison

CHALLENGE

The SME needed a clearer understanding of market entry conditions for a cardiac telerehabilitation solution in selected European healthcare systems.

SUPPORT PROVIDED

The service included market analysis, regulatory and reimbursement-related assessment, competitor analysis, stakeholder mapping and comparative country assessment. The analysis helped clarify differences between healthcare systems, rehabilitation pathways and market access conditions.

OUTPUT FOR THE SME

The SME received structured market and regulatory insights, including information on country-specific conditions, relevant barriers, stakeholder environments and possible next steps for internationalisation.

TRANSFERABLE LESSON FOR THE MANUAL

Market and regulatory orientation should be introduced before advanced market-entry decisions are made. It helps SMEs understand differences between healthcare systems, identify relevant barriers and prioritise countries, stakeholders and next steps for internationalisation.

The **Anchor & Scale module** helps SMEs prepare for long-term adoption in healthcare or rehabilitation environments. It is mainly linked to the *Production | Anchoring* phase, but some aspects should already be considered earlier. This module is important because a validated solution does not automatically become a solution used in routine care. Adoption depends on workflow integration, professional acceptance, financing, procurement, reimbursement, training, organisational readiness and long-term support structures. **Anchor & Scale** therefore translates validation and market insights into implementation planning. It helps SMEs understand what is still needed before their solution can be adopted, financed, procured or scaled.

When to use this module: Use **Anchor & Scale** when the SME needs to prepare

- implementation in a healthcare or rehabilitation organisation
- integration into existing workflows
- training and support structures for users or professionals
- procurement or reimbursement discussions
- partnerships for deployment or scaling
- monitoring of implementation results

What the implementing organisation should do

The support provider should help the SME translate previous findings into an implementation roadmap. This roadmap should identify the practical conditions required for adoption, including stakeholders, resources, documentation, training, financing and follow-up actions. The focus should remain practical. **Anchor & Scale** should not be a general discussion about future growth, but a planning step that clarifies what must happen next.

Translating support into next steps

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The *RehAllianCE Acceleration Manual* defines the SME-specific action plan as the minimum required output of each support activity. The action plan is prepared by the responsible service provider or implementing organisation after the selected support module has been delivered. It ensures that findings from validation, market orientation or anchoring support are translated into concrete next steps.

- After **Validate**, the action plan may focus on product refinements, usability improvements, further testing needs or preparation for clinical validation.
- After **Orient**, it may define regulatory follow-up, market-entry priorities, stakeholder contacts, reimbursement questions or country-specific barriers.
- After **Anchor & Scale**, it may focus on implementation requirements, training, documentation, procurement, financing, partnerships or long-term support structures.

The action plan should be concise. It should clarify what was learned, which barriers remain, what should happen next, who needs to be involved and which resources are required. This approach also reflects the implementation of the transnational pilot. The results of the validation and consulting services were documented and provided to the participating SMEs in a way that allowed them to use the findings for further product development, market preparation or strategic decision-making. The action plan therefore builds on this pilot practice and makes the transfer from service output to SME implementation more explicit.

The action plan should clarify



what was learned



which barriers remain



what should happen next



who needs to be involved



which resources are required

What makes the service result useful for SMEs?

A support activity should not end with a general report or consultation only. The result should help the SME understand what was learned and what should happen next. Depending on the selected module, the output may include:

- **Validate:** product refinement needs, usability findings or further testing requirements after Validate
- **Orient:** market-entry priorities, regulatory or reimbursement questions, competitor insights or stakeholder contacts
- **Anchor & Scale:** implementation requirements, financing questions, procurement considerations, training needs or partnership options

The exact format can differ between organisations. What matters is that the output is short, understandable and action-oriented.

How organisations can implement the RehAllianCE Acceleration Manual

The *RehAllianCE Acceleration Manual* can be implemented by service providers, business support organisations, innovation agencies, clusters, testing facilities, research organisations and healthcare innovation actors. To apply the manual in practice, implementing organisations should follow five steps.

1 Prepare the regional support offer & recruit SMEs
service providers · testing environments · expert capacities · follow-up options · clear service descriptions

Annex tool: [Service Description Template](#)

2 Conduct Match & Assess
maturity level · main challenge · expected outcome · support needs

Annex tool: [SME Needs & Readiness Check](#)

3 Assign the suitable support module & service provider

Validate

Orient

Anchor & Scale

Select the most suitable module and responsible service provider.

4 Deliver the selected support activity
Validate: testing, usability, user acceptance · Orient: market, regulation, reimbursement, stakeholders · Anchor & Scale: implementation, procurement, financing, partnerships

5 Prepare the SME-specific action plan & follow-up
key findings · remaining barriers · recommended next steps · responsible actors · follow-up opportunities

Output: Minimum output of each support activity



The Manual can be implemented by one organisation or through cooperation between several actors.



The process remains the same, while services can be adapted to regional capacities.

The five steps in practice

Step 1: Prepare the regional service offer and recruit SMEs

Before approaching SMEs, the organisation should describe its support offer clearly using a service description template (downloadable document). This includes identifying available service providers, testing environments, expert capacities and follow-up options.

Each service description should state: target group · suitable product development phase · type of support · responsible service provider · required SME input · expected output · limits of the service · possible follow-up steps

This helps avoid unrealistic expectations and makes services easier to compare across providers. The recruitment process should clearly explain what kind of support is available, who can apply and what the SME will receive.

Step 2: Conduct Match & Assess

The support organisation should use a structured Match & Assess process to understand the SME's maturity level, main challenge, expected outcome and support needs. The result should be a short readiness profile and support needs assessment - SME needs and readiness check template (downloadable document). This provides the basis for selecting the most suitable support module and service provider.

Step 3: Assign the suitable support module and service provider

Based on the Match & Assess result, the SME should be assigned to one or more support modules:

- **Validate**, if the need concerns testing, usability, user acceptance or rehabilitation fit;
- **Orient**, if the need concerns market, regulation, reimbursement, competition or ecosystem actors;
- **Anchor & Scale**, if the need concerns implementation, procurement, financing, partnerships or long-term adoption.

Step 4: Deliver the selected support activity

The selected support activity should follow the logic of the relevant module:

- **Validate**: define test setting, users, protocol, data collection and feedback format.
- **Orient**: define market focus, regulatory questions, competitor analysis, reimbursement or procurement aspects and stakeholder mapping.
- **Anchor & Scale**: define implementation conditions, workflow integration, training, financing, procurement and long-term support needs.

Across all service types, SMEs should know what will happen, when their input is needed and what they will receive at the end.

Step 5: Prepare the SME-specific action plan and follow-up

The process should end with a short SME-specific action plan that translates the service result into practical next steps. The action plan should be discussed with the SME, so that findings are understood and follow-up actions are realistic. Where possible, the implementing organisation should also indicate follow-up opportunities, such as further testing, expert consultation, partner contacts, funding opportunities, reimbursement clarification or integration into a wider innovation ecosystem.

Minimum implementation requirements

To implement the *RehAllianCE Acceleration Manual*, a support organisation needs: an overview of available service providers · access to testing, validation or expert environments · clear service descriptions · a method for matching SME needs with suitable support modules · follow-up options or referral pathways

Not every support organisation needs to provide all services itself. The manual can also be implemented through cooperation between several organisations, for example a cluster coordinating SME intake, a living lab providing validation and a business support organisation providing market orientation.

Pilot-derived recommendations for regional authorities

The transnational pilot provides several practical recommendations for regional authorities seeking to strengthen support for the commercialisation and internationalisation of rehabilitation technologies:



Facilitate access to testing and validation infrastructures, including cross-border and test-before-invest opportunities, so that SMEs can validate technologies in realistic environments before larger investments or market entry.



Link validation with market and implementation support. Regional support measures should not treat testing, regulatory orientation, reimbursement, market access and implementation as isolated steps, but enable SMEs to access complementary support according to their maturity and needs.



Strengthen coordination between innovation and health policy actors. Authorities responsible for SME and innovation support should cooperate more closely with authorities responsible for health policy and relevant healthcare stakeholders, particularly where regulation, reimbursement, procurement and implementation conditions influence technology uptake.



Use structured matchmaking and needs assessment to connect SMEs with suitable testing facilities, expertise and support organisations within and beyond their region.

These pilot-derived recommendations provide input to the broader policy recommendations developed within the RehAllianCE Smart_Rehab Strategy.

Transferability and long-term use

The *RehAllianCE Acceleration Manual* is designed to be transferable to different regional innovation ecosystems. Organisations do not need to replicate the exact services delivered during the transnational pilot. Instead, they can apply the same support logic and adapt the specific services to their local capacities.

Who can implement the manual? The manual can be implemented by business support organisations, digital innovation hubs, living labs, research and technology organisations, universities, healthcare providers, innovation clusters, testing facilities and public authorities responsible for innovation, health or regional development.

What is needed? Implementing organisations should ideally have access to:

- Expertise in rehabilitation, healthcare innovation or MedTech support
- Access to testing or validation environments
- Market, regulatory, reimbursement or business support expertise
- Cooperation with healthcare or rehabilitation stakeholders
- Capacity to provide follow-up guidance or referrals

The value of the manual lies in this reproducible structure. It enables support organisations to provide assistance that is needs-based, documented, transferable and connected to concrete next steps. After the project lifetime, the *RehAllianCE Acceleration Manual* should remain available through the RehAllianCE Competence Centre as a knowledge-transfer and orientation resource. The Competence Centre can support long-term use by linking the methodology to relevant thematic support areas and updating practical tools over time. In this way, selected elements of the methodology are operationalised beyond the transnational pilot, while the *RehAllianCE Acceleration Manual* itself remains a transferable resource that other ecosystems can adapt to their own capacities.

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Interreg Central Europe is a transnational cooperation programme supporting innovative solutions to common challenges across Central European regions. RehAllianCE addresses the critical intersection of demographic change, digital transformation, and equitable access to rehabilitation services, a priority area for healthcare policymakers across the programme region.