D2.1

FashionKIC Node Operational Framework

FashionKIC

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Table of contents

Table of figures

Executive Summary

The FashionKIC Node Operational Framework sets out the common operating model for establishing and running the FashionKIC Innovation Nodes in Greece, Portugal, Romania and Spain. In line with the Grant Agreement, it defines the core functions, governance structure, decision-making logic and minimum operating conditions to be applied across all nodes, while allowing justified adaptation to regional context. It is intended as a practical implementation guide for node operators, WP leaders and consortium partners involved in the roll-out of WP2.

The framework translates the objectives of WP2 into an operational model for node set-up, stakeholder engagement, activity planning, quality assurance, reporting, cross-node collaboration and institutional anchoring. It clarifies what must remain common across the network, what may be adapted locally, who is expected to decide what, and when issues should remain at node level or be escalated to WP2 or project-level coordination.

The framework also defines how nodes connect to the wider FashionKIC architecture. Nodes are expected to provide regional intelligence, stakeholder access, testing opportunities and implementation support relevant to WP1 on the AI-powered platform, WP3 on capacity building, WP4 on acceleration, WP5 on policy and scaling, WP6 on communication and ecosystem building, and WP7 on project coordination and integration. In this sense, the node is not only a local structure but also an operational interface between regional ecosystems and the wider project.

A strengthened sustainability perspective has been integrated throughout the document following partner feedback. Sustainability is treated as a cross-cutting operational filter rather than as a stand-alone topic. The framework therefore applies an ESG perspective, a value-chain lens and a materiality approach to help nodes identify relevant priorities, engage the right actors and interpret ecosystem needs in a way that is both locally grounded and aligned with FashionKIC's wider ambition to support the digital and green transition of the European fashion and textile sector.

The document is structured around four practical questions: what a FashionKIC node is expected to do; how the node network is governed; how nodes should operate in practice; and how consistency, learning and continuity are maintained. The final sections provide implementation guidance, minimum standards and practical annexes to support day-to-day use of the framework during WP2 and beyond.

How to use this Framework

This framework is intended to be used as a practical reference for node set-up, coordination, decision-making and review throughout WP2 implementation. Section 2 defines what a FashionKIC node is expected to do and the minimum conditions for credible operation. Sections 3 and 4 provide the shared values, governance logic and decision-making structure needed to guide local choices within a common framework. Section 5 translates this into day-to-day operational practice, while Section 6 provides a sustainability lens to support prioritisation, stakeholder engagement and activity design. Sections 7 to 10 should be used to support monitoring, learning, cross-node collaboration, long-term anchoring and implementation planning. The annexes complement the main text by providing practical reference tools for roles and responsibilities, decision and escalation logic, minimum standards and shared terminology.

The annexes below should be used as practical reference tools to support local decision-making, coordination and review.

Alongside the framework, a companion visual operational manual may be used for onboarding and quick consultation, and a node toolkit may be used to support implementation with standardised templates. Suggested toolkit components include stakeholder tracking, meeting records, activity planning and debrief templates, decision and escalation notes, reporting summaries, sustainability prompts and cross-node learning logs.

1. Introduction

This section sets out the purpose, scope, methodological approach and reference context of the framework.

FashionKIC aims to establish a pan-European Knowledge and Innovation Community for Sustainable Fashion by connecting physical innovation nodes with a digital platform, training activities, acceleration support, communication actions and policy engagement. Within this architecture, WP2 provides the human and organisational infrastructure of the initiative by creating a transnational network of FashionKIC Innovation Nodes anchored in diverse regional ecosystems and connected through a common European operational framework.

This framework has been developed by ModaLisboa to define the common operating model for those nodes during the project period. It sets out the core functions, governance logic, operational structure and implementation principles that should guide node establishment and day-to-day functioning across the initial participating countries, while allowing for regional adaptation. Its purpose is not to prescribe identical institutional arrangements in every context, but to provide a shared operational basis that enables consistency, comparability and coordinated implementation across the network.

The framework should therefore be read as an implementation document. Its function is to support node set-up, day-to-day coordination, local decision-making, stakeholder engagement, cross-node consistency and alignment with the wider project. In practical terms, nodes help identify stakeholders, regional needs and use cases relevant to WP1, support local participation and piloting environments for WP3, connect innovation actors and entrepreneurial initiatives relevant to WP4, generate ecosystem intelligence and regional alignment relevant to WP5, and contribute local visibility, stories and ecosystem connections to WP6. It does not replace the formal project governance arrangements established under WP7, nor does it pre-empt the longer-term governance and sustainability strategy to be developed under WP5. Rather, it provides the minimum common architecture required to establish, activate and operate the node network during the project period.

The document has been developed on the basis of the Grant Agreement, project overview materials, WP2 working discussions, the evolving framework structure

and partner feedback gathered during the drafting process. Particular attention has been paid to comments requesting a more operational structure, clearer interfaces with the wider project architecture, and a stronger integration of sustainability through ESG, value-chain and materiality perspectives.

1.1 Purpose and scope

The purpose of this framework is fourfold. First, it defines what constitutes a FashionKIC node in operational terms. Second, it clarifies the governance and decision-making arrangements needed for coordinated implementation across countries. Third, it provides practical guidance for stakeholder engagement, activity planning, coordination routines and node-to-project interfaces. Fourth, it establishes a common reference point for monitoring, quality assurance and institutional anchoring during the funded period.

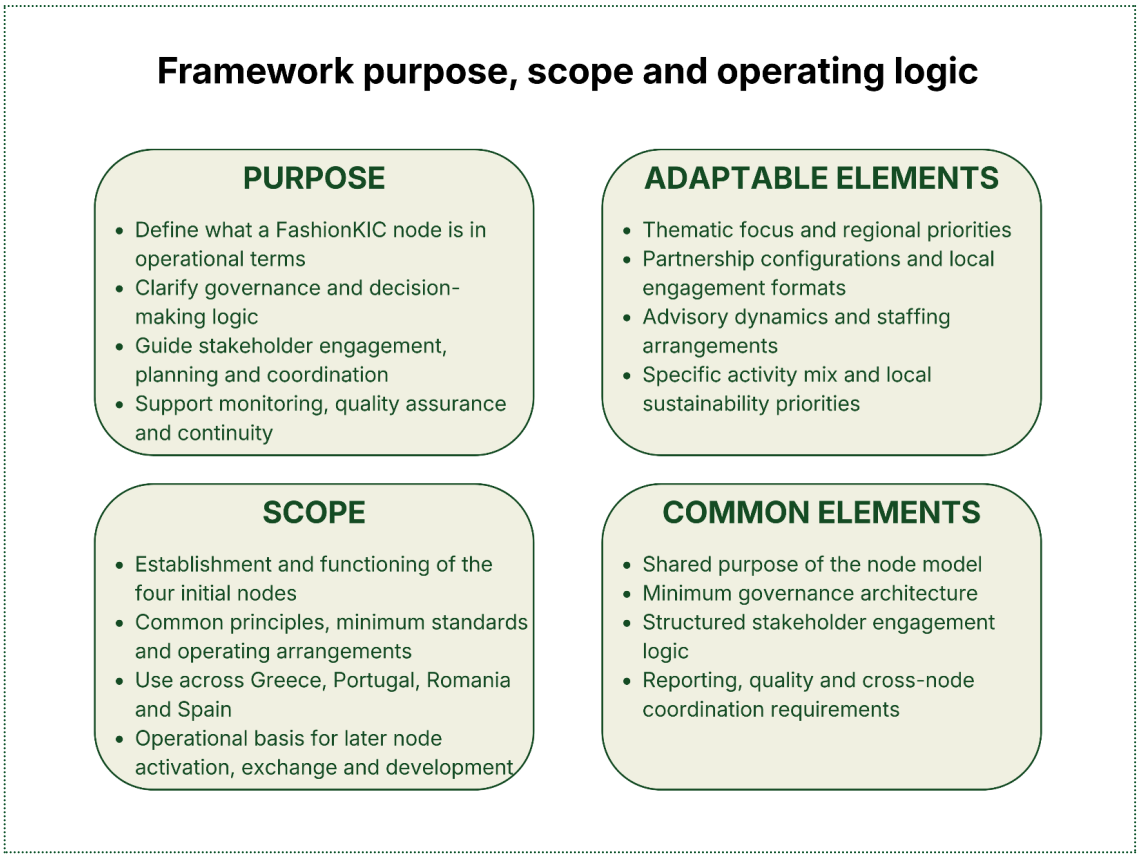

Figure 1. This diagram provides a visual summary of the framework's purpose, scope and design logic, showing the balance between common operating elements that should remain consistent across nodes and adaptable elements that may vary according to regional context.

The scope of the document covers the establishment and functioning of the four initial nodes during the project lifetime. It sets out common principles, minimum standards and recommended operating arrangements for node operators in Greece, Portugal, Romania and Spain. It also creates the operational basis for later WP2 outputs, especially those related to ecosystem mapping, knowledge

exchange, local node activation, and node development and sustainability planning.

The framework does not require identical institutional forms, staffing structures or activity portfolios across countries. Regional adaptation is not treated as an exception to the model, but as one of its design conditions. What must remain consistent is the shared purpose of the nodes, the minimum governance architecture, the commitment to structured stakeholder engagement, the reporting and quality logic, and the contribution of local activities to the common objectives of FashionKIC.

1.2 Methodological approach

The methodological approach underlying this deliverable combines top-down alignment with bottom-up implementation input. The top-down dimension comes from the Grant Agreement, the overall logic of the project and the interdependencies between work packages. The bottom-up dimension comes from partner discussions on what is operationally realistic, locally relevant and manageable within the available timeframe and resources. This combined approach reflects the central design challenge of WP2: creating a coherent European node network without imposing a rigid or over-centralised operating model.

The drafting process has therefore followed five methodological principles. First, implementation over abstraction: the document prioritises decisions, roles, routines and usable guidance. Second, common architecture with local flexibility: the framework distinguishes clearly between elements that must remain common

and elements that may be adapted. Third, ecosystem orientation: nodes are treated as locally embedded relational platforms rather than as stand-alone service providers. Fourth, learning through iteration: governance and operational arrangements should be capable of adjustment through review and feedback. Fifth, sustainability integration: ESG, value-chain and materiality considerations should inform node priorities, stakeholder engagement and activity design from the start.

Methodologically, the framework combines three sources of operational design. First, it draws on the formal requirements of the Grant Agreement and the specific obligations of Task 2.1. Second, it translates the emerging WP2 methodology into a usable governance and implementation model, especially in relation to ecosystem mapping, stakeholder engagement, activation and cross-node coordination. Third, it incorporates partner feedback on what is feasible, relevant and proportionate within different regional ecosystems. The framework should therefore be read not as a theoretical governance model, but as an implementation-oriented synthesis of grant requirements, WP2 methodological development and partner operating realities.

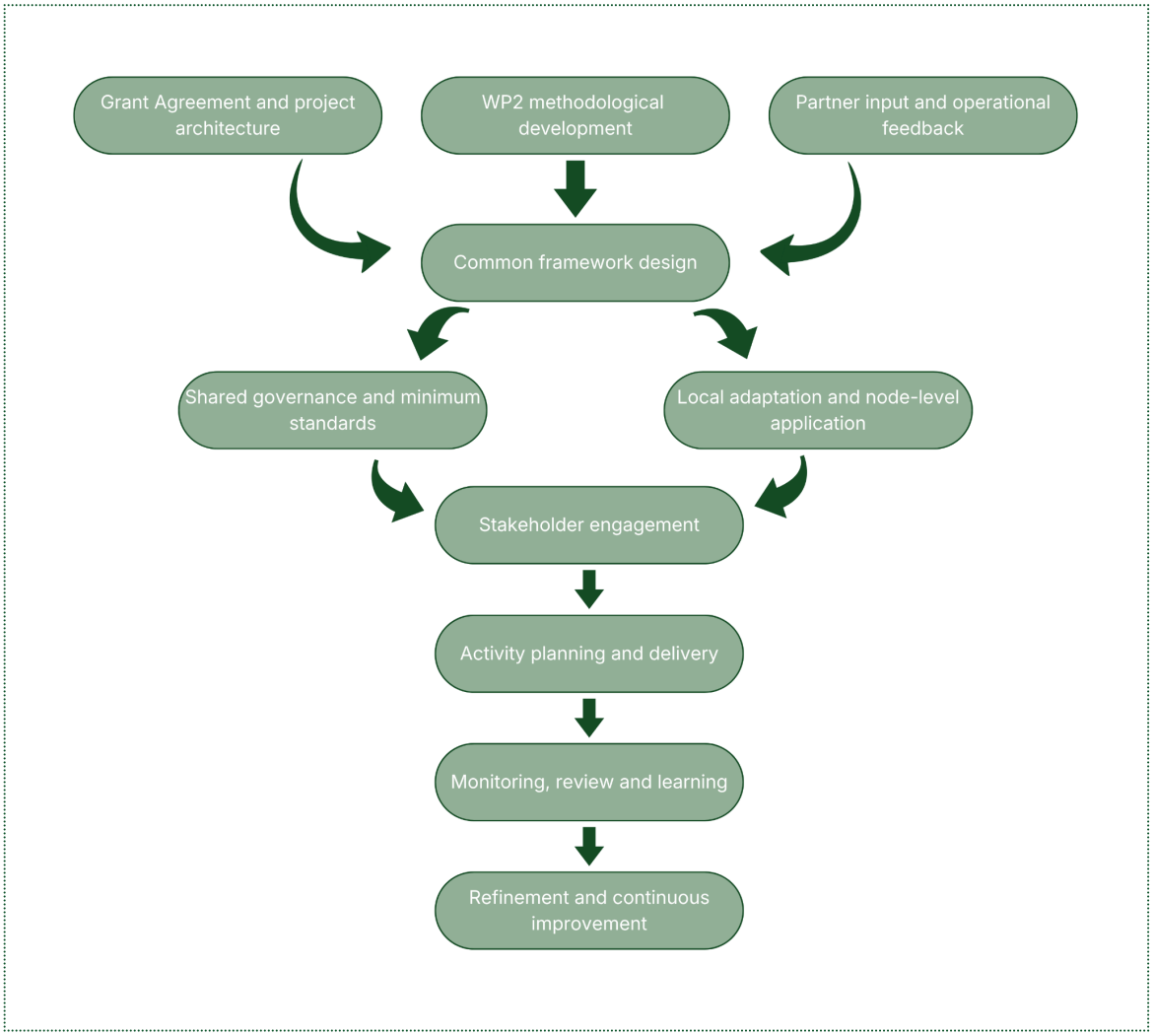

Figure 2. Methodological approach used to develop and apply the FashionKIC Node Operational Framework.

The framework also adopts a layered methodology. At network level, it defines common functions, standards and governance logic. At node level, it allows adaptation of formats, themes and partnership configurations. At activity level, it proposes a common planning and documentation logic intended to support comparability, quality assurance and evidence generation across different contexts.

1.3 Relation to other deliverables and milestones

This framework should be read as the operational foundation for the wider implementation of WP2. It establishes the common logic that later WP2 outputs build upon and helps clarify how node-related work connects to the wider project architecture.

Within WP2, the framework provides the baseline operating model for node set-up, governance, stakeholder engagement, coordination and implementation.

It creates the common reference point for ecosystem mapping, cross-node knowledge exchange, local node activation, and node strategic development and sustainability planning. In this sense, it does not duplicate those outputs, but frames the minimum operating conditions under which they can be developed in a coherent and comparable way.

The framework should also be understood in relation to project milestones and review moments. It supports early node establishment, the application of the ecosystem mapping methodology, the activation of local stakeholder structures, and the gradual strengthening of cross-node collaboration. It should therefore be used as a live implementation reference throughout WP2, rather than as a document consulted only at the point of formal reporting.

1.4 Reference documents

This framework is developed in alignment with the following reference documents and strategic sources:

- The FashionKIC Grant Agreement (GAP-101256183).
- The Description of Action (Part B).
- The objectives, tasks and timing defined under WP2 – FashionKIC Innovation Nodes Network.
- Relevant project-wide coordination, monitoring and quality assurance arrangements.
- Relevant European policy and strategic frameworks related to sustainable fashion, textiles innovation and ecosystem transition.

2. The FashionKIC Node Model

This section defines what a FashionKIC node is in operational terms. Its purpose is to move from general project ambition to a usable node model that partners can apply in practice. The section clarifies the core functions of the node, the minimum conditions required for credible operation, the boundaries of the node's role, and the lifecycle through which a node is expected to evolve during the project period. In doing so, it establishes the node not as an abstract concept, but as a working structure for activation, coordination and project delivery.

A FashionKIC node is the local operating anchor of a transnational innovation network dedicated to sustainable fashion transformation. It works at the intersection of ecosystem development, stakeholder engagement, capacity building and collaborative innovation. A node is not primarily a venue, an incubator, a communication channel or a project management office. It is an

organised local interface through which FashionKIC connects to regional actors and through which regional needs, assets and opportunities are translated into project-relevant action.

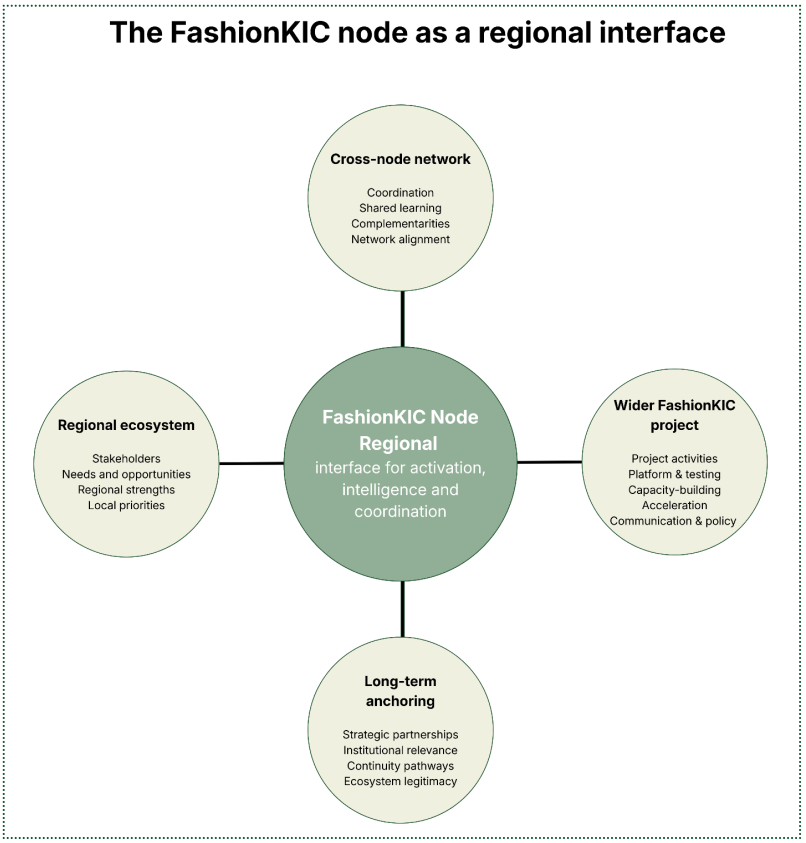

Figure 3. This diagram illustrates the node as a locally anchored interface that connects the regional ecosystem to the wider FashionKIC project, the cross-node network and longer-term continuity pathways. It highlights the node's role not as a stand-alone structure, but as a point of connection, translation and implementation across multiple levels.

In practical terms, node operation may take different forms depending on context, timing and ecosystem need. During the project, a node may, for example, convene a targeted stakeholder roundtable to test regional priorities and identify gaps in the ecosystem; support WP1 by helping identify relevant user profiles and organising local testing opportunities for platform features; or mobilise local participants, partners and spaces for training, pilot or capacity-building activities linked to other parts of the project. Beyond the immediate project cycle, the importance of the node lies in its potential to become a recognised point of connection within the regional ecosystem: a structure that helps sustain relationships, maintain intelligence on ecosystem needs, support future collaboration and give continuity to activities or partnerships that prove strategically valuable over time. These examples are illustrative rather than exhaustive, but they show how the node model can generate both project-relevant implementation support and longer-term ecosystem value.

The FashionKIC node model is intentionally hybrid. It combines European coordination with regional specificity, strategic direction with operational

flexibility, and physical presence with digital connectivity. This hybrid model is necessary because the participating regions differ in ecosystem maturity, industrial structure, institutional arrangements and sustainability priorities. A shared operational framework is therefore more useful than a uniform delivery model.

2.1 Core functions of the nodes

The first core function of a node is ecosystem activation. Each node must identify relevant actors in its regional fashion ecosystem, prioritise those most relevant to FashionKIC objectives, and create regular points of contact through consultations, roundtables, workshops or other node activities. Activation should create visible participation pathways and recurring interaction, not one-off outreach.

The second core function is stakeholder engagement and relationship management. Node operators should move stakeholders from initial identification to meaningful forms of involvement, such as consultations, advisory roles, event participation, pilot contributions, testing or longer-term collaboration. This requires segmentation, prioritisation, follow-up and documentation, not only broad contact lists.

The third core function is intelligence generation. Through mapping, consultations and implementation activity, each node should produce usable insight on regional assets, barriers, gaps, opportunities and transition needs. This intelligence should inform WP2 planning and also support other work packages where platform features, training priorities, acceleration activity, policy dialogue or communication strategy need to reflect local realities.

The fourth core function is implementation support. Nodes are expected to host, coordinate or enable project-relevant activities such as workshops, consultations, pilot actions, learning events, acceleration-related outreach, testing and local dissemination. The exact mix may vary by region, but each node must be able to plan, deliver, document and follow up activities that contribute to project objectives.

The fifth core function is cross-node contribution. Nodes are not stand-alone regional units. They form part of a shared network that is expected to generate European added value through comparison, transfer of practice, collaborative experimentation and common learning. Each node should therefore participate actively in WP2 coordination, shared reflection and network-wide alignment processes.

2.2 What a FashionKIC node is not

For operational clarity, the FashionKIC node model also requires a negative definition. A node is not, by default, a separate legal entity created under this project. It is not a stand-alone programme competing with existing regional organisations, and it is not a branch office of the consortium. It is also not expected to deliver every project activity independently or to duplicate the responsibilities of other work packages.

This clarification matters because it sets realistic boundaries. Nodes provide enabling infrastructure for engagement, testing, coordination and local activation. They create the conditions under which collaboration, learning, innovation support and dissemination can happen more effectively, but they do not replace the WPs responsible for those functions.

2.3 Minimum operational requirements

To operate credibly within the FashionKIC network, each node should meet a minimum operational baseline. At a minimum, this means: one clearly designated node lead; basic day-to-day coordination capacity; a stakeholder map with a minimum critical mass; an identifiable governance and advisory structure; a planning and reporting routine; and the ability to host or coordinate local stakeholder-facing activities. These are minimum operating conditions, not optional good practices.

The Grant Agreement also establishes specific expectations relevant to the node model. Each region must identify at least 30 key stakeholders through ecosystem mapping and establish a local advisory group of five representatives from different stakeholder categories. Nodes are also expected to contribute to regional events, engagement activity, testing and local activation processes. In this framework, these requirements are translated into minimum operating standards rather than treated as isolated deliverable obligations.

Each node should also maintain a clear interface with the consortium. This means a nominated focal point for WP2 communication, participation in common reporting and review processes, and an internal ability to keep local implementation aligned with the common framework and project timeline.

2.4 Node lifecycle

For implementation purposes, node development can be understood through a staged lifecycle. The first stage is set-up, including identification of responsible actors, clarification of institutional anchoring and initial positioning of the node in the regional ecosystem. The second stage is mapping and listening, during which the node gathers intelligence on stakeholders, specialisations, needs, barriers

and opportunities. The third stage is activation, focused on outreach, consultations, early community-building and establishment of advisory structures. The fourth stage is operation, in which the node runs activities, maintains routines and contributes actively to project delivery. The fifth stage is consolidation, in which the node strengthens partnerships, stabilises ways of working and prepares the basis for continuity beyond the project.

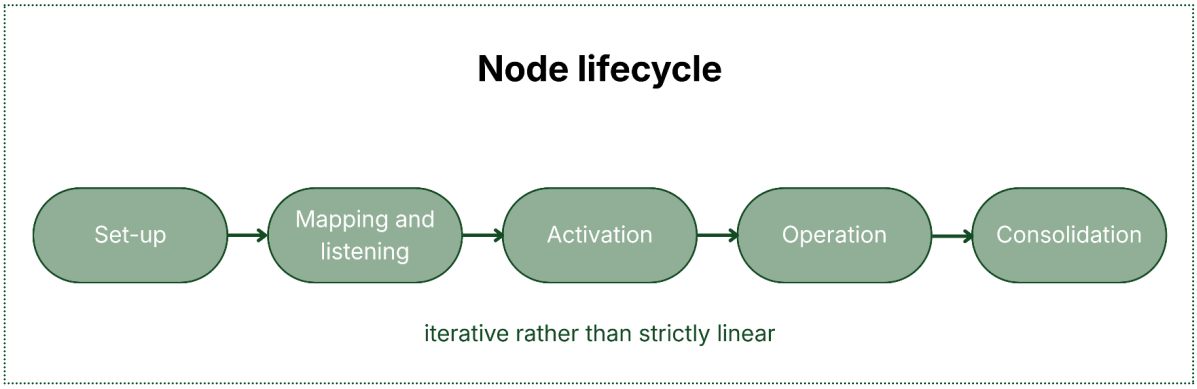

Figure 4 This diagram presents the node lifecycle as a staged but iterative process, showing how nodes move from set-up to consolidation while revisiting earlier stages as implementation evolves..

The lifecycle is not strictly linear. Later stages may require updates to earlier work, especially where mapping, thematic focus or governance arrangements need adjustment. However, the lifecycle provides a useful planning logic for sequencing work and distinguishing between immediate set-up needs and longer-term maturity needs.

3. Guiding Principles

This section sets out the shared values and guiding principles that should shape how the FashionKIC nodes operate across regions. Its role is not to add an abstract layer to the framework, but to provide a common reference for interpreting local choices, assessing adaptations and maintaining a consistent collaboration culture across the network. In a model that combines shared architecture with regional flexibility, these principles help ensure that different operating choices still remain aligned with the wider purpose and logic of FashionKIC.

The FashionKIC node framework is underpinned by a shared set of operational values and guiding principles. These values are intended to shape decision-making, collaboration culture and implementation choices across all nodes. They do not replace formal procedures, roles or decision rules. Rather,

they provide the common reference logic against which node practices, governance choices and local adaptations can be assessed.

At network level, these values are especially important because the FashionKIC nodes will operate in different regional ecosystems, with different institutional configurations, sector profiles and sustainability priorities. A shared framework therefore requires more than common structures; it also requires a common understanding of how the network is expected to work in practice. In this sense, the principles below are not abstract statements. They are intended to guide everyday implementation choices, from stakeholder engagement and activity design to coordination, review and long-term anchoring.

The first value is collaboration. Nodes are expected to work as part of a distributed European network rather than as isolated local initiatives. This means building shared ownership, working through clear interfaces and recognising that value is created through connection, exchange and coordination across regions and work packages.

The second value is regional relevance. Each node should remain grounded in the realities of its own ecosystem, including its actors, needs, specialisations and opportunities. The framework is not intended to produce identical local models, but to ensure that local adaptation takes place within a shared architecture and in support of common project objectives.

The third value is practicality. The node model should remain usable for implementation. Governance, routines and procedures should support action, decision-making and follow-up, rather than creating unnecessary administrative burden or conceptual ambiguity.

The fourth value is inclusion and ecosystem diversity. Node activity should reflect the breadth of the regional fashion ecosystem and should avoid narrow capture by a single organisation type, sector niche or institutional perspective. This includes taking seriously the diversity of actors across the value chain and recognising that meaningful innovation often depends on connections between actors who do not usually work together.

The fifth value is learning and adaptability. Nodes should be capable of adjusting their priorities, formats and routines in response to feedback, changing conditions and implementation experience. Adaptation should not weaken the framework; it should strengthen its usefulness over time.

The sixth value is sustainability responsibility. Sustainability is not treated as an external communication layer or as a topic to be addressed only in specialised activities. It is a defining characteristic of the node model and should influence what issues are prioritised, which stakeholders are engaged, how activities are framed and how long-term relevance is understood.

Taken together, these values translate into six guiding principles for implementation. The first principle is European coherence with regional relevance. Nodes should contribute to a common European initiative while remaining embedded in local ecosystem conditions. The second principle is collaboration over centralisation. The network should operate through distributed implementation, shared responsibility and clear interfaces rather than through concentrated control. The third principle is practical usability. Governance and procedures should help nodes act, decide and coordinate effectively. The fourth principle is inclusion and ecosystem diversity. Node activity should reflect the breadth of the ecosystem and support meaningful participation across stakeholder categories. The fifth principle is learning and adaptation. Node routines should be reviewed and improved in light of implementation experience. The sixth principle is sustainability integration. Sustainability should be treated as a cross-cutting operational filter that shapes governance, mapping, engagement and activity design.

These principles should be used as a practical reference when interpreting the framework, especially in cases where local choices are possible. Where nodes need to adapt formats, partnership configurations or thematic priorities, the relevant question is not only whether a choice is locally useful, but also whether it remains consistent with the shared values and operating logic of the wider FashionKIC network.

Operationally, this means that these principles should inform concrete implementation choices rather than remain abstract reference points. In practice, node teams should use them to guide stakeholder selection, activity design, local adaptation, coordination with other nodes, and the review of whether implementation remains aligned with the wider purpose and operating logic of FashionKIC.

3.1 Common and adaptable elements

A key design feature of the framework is the distinction between common elements and adaptable elements. Common elements are those that must be present in all nodes to ensure coherence, comparability and basic operating consistency. They include the overall purpose of the node, the minimum governance architecture, the core reporting logic, the expectation of structured stakeholder engagement, use of the ecosystem mapping methodology, and participation in cross-node coordination and review processes.

Adaptable elements are those that may vary according to local context without weakening the framework. They include thematic focus, event formats, partnership configurations, advisory modes, staffing arrangements and specific sustainability priorities, provided these remain aligned with the broader objectives of FashionKIC. This distinction should allow node operators to make local

decisions confidently without creating ambiguity about what must remain common.

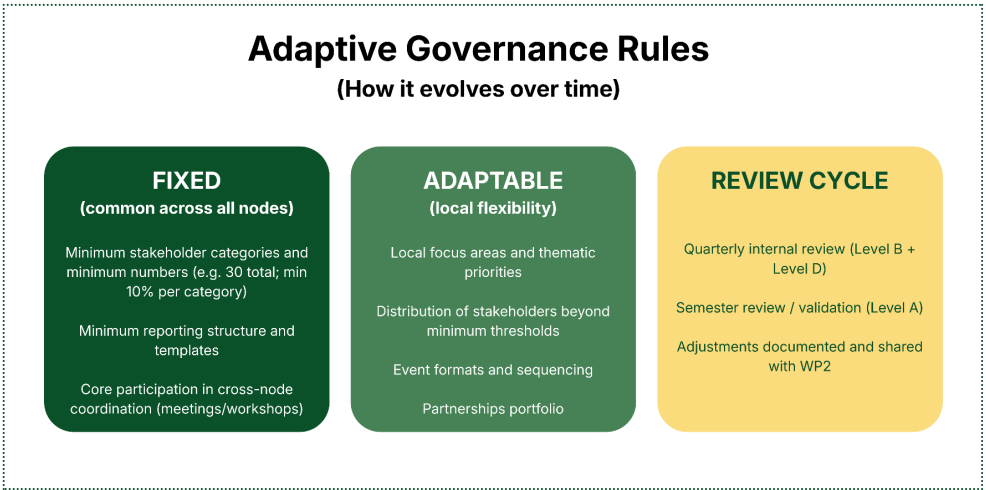

Figure 5. Adaptive governance rules: fixed elements common to all nodes, locally adaptable elements and the minimum review cycle for adjustments.

4. Governance and Decision-Making Model

This section defines how responsibility, authority and accountability should be organised within the FashionKIC node model. Its purpose is to make clear who is expected to decide what, which decisions remain at node level, which require validation, and when escalation is necessary. The governance model is intended to support implementation rather than slow it down: it should provide enough structure to ensure consistency, quality and accountability, while still allowing nodes to operate with sufficient agility in their local context.

The governance model of the FashionKIC nodes is designed to balance strategic direction, operational flexibility, ecosystem participation and project-level coherence. In line with the Grant Agreement, the framework must include mechanisms for decision-making, resource allocation, quality assurance and performance assessment. At the same time, governance should remain proportionate to the scale of WP2 and compatible with the wider coordination arrangements established under WP7.

The model therefore follows a layered logic. At node level, governance is organised around four functions: strategic oversight, day-to-day management, implementation support and advisory input. At network level, WP2 coordination maintains methodological coherence and cross-node alignment. At project level, the consortium governance structures led under WP7 provide overall supervision, risk management, quality assurance and escalation routes. This structure is intended to avoid both fragmentation and over-centralisation.

4.1 Governance levels

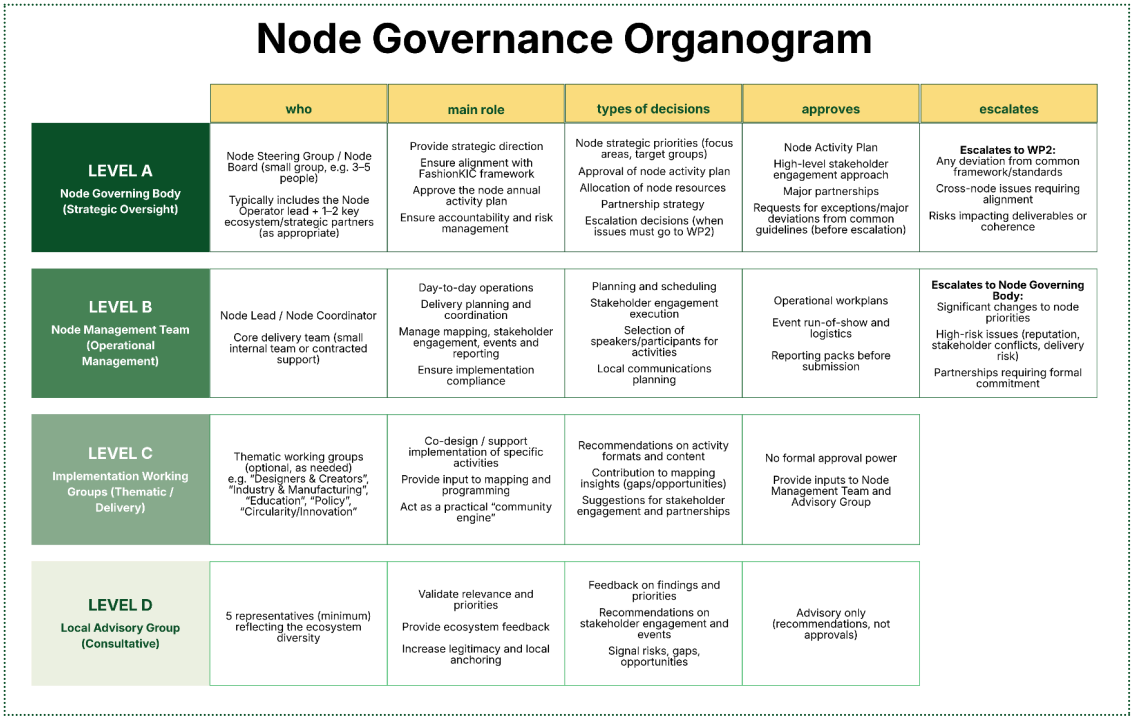

Figure 6. Suggested node governance organogram showing the four operating levels: strategic oversight, operational management, implementation support and advisory input.

Level 1 is the Node Governing Body, or equivalent strategic oversight function. It is responsible for validating node priorities, reviewing major partnerships, confirming significant changes of direction and considering issues that may affect the node's positioning, commitments or compliance with the common framework.

Level 2 is the Node Management Team. This is the operational core of the node. It is responsible for day-to-day coordination, work planning, stakeholder follow-up, documentation, activity delivery, routine problem-solving and liaison with WP2 coordination and relevant work packages.

Level 3 consists of Implementation or Thematic Working Groups, where useful. These groups support the design or delivery of specific activities, pilots or

thematic strands. They may be temporary and should be used only where they add delivery value, specialist input or co-design capacity.

Level 4 is the Local Advisory Group. This group provides external feedback, legitimacy and strategic challenge. It is not an executive body, but it should help the node test assumptions, identify opportunities, validate relevance and remain connected to wider ecosystem priorities.

4.2 Governance roles and responsibilities

The governance structure of each FashionKIC node should remain as simple as possible while ensuring clear responsibility, coordination and accountability. In practice, governance roles should distinguish between strategic oversight, operational management, consultative input and, where useful, temporary implementation support.

The Node Governing Body, or equivalent strategic oversight function, should normally be anchored in the host organisation or node operator. Its role is to validate major priorities, review significant partnerships or changes in direction, and consider issues that may affect alignment with the common framework. Additional institutional involvement may be included where locally relevant, but the model should avoid unnecessary complexity.

The Node Management Team is the operational core of the node. It should include, at minimum, the node lead and the staff or collaborators responsible for implementation. The team is responsible for work planning, stakeholder follow-up, activity preparation, documentation, reporting and liaison with WP2 coordination and relevant work packages. It should have clear authority to take routine operational decisions within the agreed framework.

Implementation or thematic working groups may be used where they add practical value, but they should remain exceptional rather than standard structures. Where established, they should be light, purpose-specific and time-bound. Their role may include specialist input, local co-design, support to emerging initiatives, or focused collaboration in new thematic or territorial areas where additional involvement is useful.

The Local Advisory Group should reflect ecosystem diversity and include representatives from different stakeholder categories, such as design and creative practice, manufacturing or supply-chain actors, education and research, intermediary organisations, public authorities or policy-linked actors, and sustainability-related expertise where relevant. Its role is to provide feedback, relevance testing and external anchoring. It should not replace formal governance or management accountability.

To support consistency across nodes, each node should maintain a regular but proportionate coordination rhythm. The exact frequency may be adapted to local delivery conditions, provided that planning, review, stakeholder follow-up and decision-making remain timely and reliable. As a general baseline, the Node Management Team should coordinate more frequently during active implementation periods and at least once per quarter as a minimum baseline. Strategic oversight should be convened periodically and whenever major decisions are required. The Node Governing Body should normally meet at least once per semester and additionally whenever a strategic decision, major partnership, significant deviation or material delivery risk requires review. The Local Advisory Group should be engaged periodically, and normally at least once per quarter or three times per year, to review ecosystem relevance, mapping findings, priority areas and major planned activities. Implementation or thematic working groups should be convened on an as-needed basis, with a clear scope, expected output and time horizon.

Each governance meeting should have a named convener, a short agenda circulated in advance where relevant, a brief summary of key decisions and follow-up points, and a clear owner for each agreed action. Where necessary, issues affecting common standards, methodological coherence or interdependencies with other work packages should be flagged to WP2 coordination.

The Local Advisory Group should function as a consultative mechanism rather than as an executive body. Its composition and rhythm may vary according to local context, but it should be engaged often enough to help test relevance, review priorities, identify opportunities and signal emerging risks or ecosystem shifts.

4.3 Decision-making logic

Decision-making in the FashionKIC node model should follow a subsidiarity principle. Wherever possible, routine decisions should be taken at node level by those closest to implementation, while decisions with strategic, cross-node or framework-level implications should be reviewed or escalated accordingly. The objective is to avoid both unnecessary centralisation and ambiguity about who is responsible for what.

In practice, the Node Management Team should take routine operational decisions related to work planning, stakeholder outreach, activity formats, follow-up actions and day-to-day implementation choices. The Node Governing Body, or equivalent strategic oversight function, should be involved when decisions concern major priorities, significant partnerships, notable changes in direction, or issues that may affect alignment with the common framework.

Some decisions may have implications beyond the individual node. These include proposed deviations from minimum standards, issues affecting methodological coherence, decisions with reputational or delivery risk, and actions that may create interdependencies with other work packages or nodes. In such cases, the issue should be flagged to WP2 coordination early enough to allow review, alignment or escalation where needed.

Three broad categories of decision can therefore be distinguished. The first category includes strategic decisions, such as node positioning, major partnerships, significant resource choices and substantial changes in local priorities. The second includes operational decisions, such as activity planning, consultation methods, stakeholder sequencing, routine coordination and implementation follow-up. The third includes framework-affecting decisions, such as proposed exceptions, methodological deviations or choices that may affect comparability, quality assurance or wider project coherence.

As a general rule, decisions should be taken at the lowest effective level, but with sufficient documentation where wider implications exist. This means that routine matters do not need to be escalated unnecessarily, while strategic or framework-relevant issues should be made visible in time to support coordinated action. The purpose of this logic is not to create a heavy approval culture, but to support clarity, accountability and coherence across the node network.

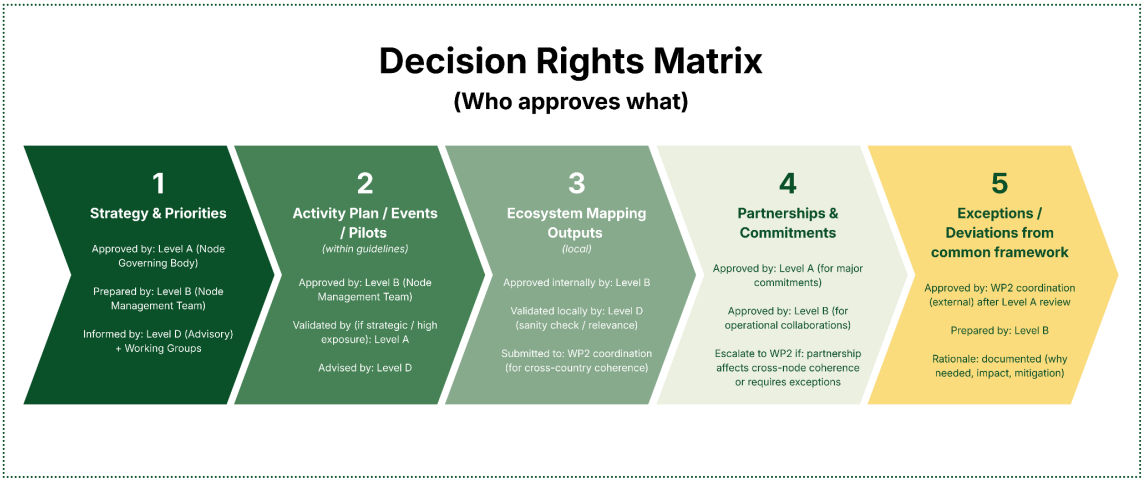

Figure 7. Decision rights matrix indicating who prepares, validates or escalates key categories of node decisions.

4.4 Resource allocation, quality assurance and escalation

The framework recognises that node implementation takes place within a wider consortium structure and under a shared grant logic. Resource allocation within each node will therefore follow partner-specific internal arrangements, but it should remain aligned with agreed priorities, planned activities and the common objectives of FashionKIC. In practice, resources should be used in ways that

clearly support stakeholder engagement, node activation, coordination, documentation and contribution to project-level outputs.

Quality assurance should be embedded in implementation rather than treated as a separate or overly formal process. At node level, this means ensuring that activities and outputs are prepared with sufficient clarity, that key materials are reviewed before use or dissemination where relevant, and that feedback is incorporated in a timely way. The aim is not to create an additional administrative layer, but to ensure that node activity remains credible, usable and aligned with the common framework.

Within the wider project structure, quality assurance should remain connected to the review and validation logic established under WP7 and to the coordination role of WP2. For node teams, this means maintaining sufficient documentation, preparing outputs in a way that supports review where needed, and making emerging issues visible early enough to allow adjustment or support.

Escalation should be used when an issue cannot be resolved at node level, when a decision may affect other nodes or work packages, or when risks emerge that could affect coherence, quality, timelines or stakeholder trust. Escalation is not a sign that local autonomy has failed; rather, it is a practical mechanism for managing interdependencies in a distributed network.

As a working principle, node teams should seek to resolve routine operational matters locally, while flagging strategic, cross-node or framework-relevant issues early enough to support coordinated action. This helps preserve agility at local level while ensuring that the network continues to operate with sufficient consistency and shared accountability.

5. Operational Model

This section explains how FashionKIC nodes are expected to operate in practice in order to generate value both locally and across the wider network. The mission of each node is to act as a locally anchored interface between FashionKIC and the regional ecosystem, translating project objectives into relevant local engagement, activity and collaboration.

In operational terms, nodes are expected to work in the parts of the ecosystem where they can create the greatest strategic value. This does not mean covering

the whole ecosystem equally at all times, but identifying where each node can most effectively support activation, connection, intelligence generation and contribution to the wider objectives of FashionKIC. In line with the regional logic of the project, this may involve a stronger focus on different ecosystem entry points in each country, including emerging designers and entrepreneurial initiatives in Greece, traditional craftsmanship and contemporary design in Portugal, manufacturing strengths and industrial transformation in Romania, and design education and urban fashion clusters in Spain.

Across the project, nodes are expected to achieve four operational objectives. First, to activate and structure meaningful engagement within their regional ecosystems around sustainable fashion innovation. Second, to generate usable intelligence, relationships and opportunities that can inform node development and support the wider objectives of FashionKIC. Third, to connect local activities and stakeholder groups to the broader network, so that knowledge, contacts and emerging priorities can circulate across regions. Fourth, to contribute to a more coordinated and visible European node network whose combined impact is greater than the sum of its local parts.

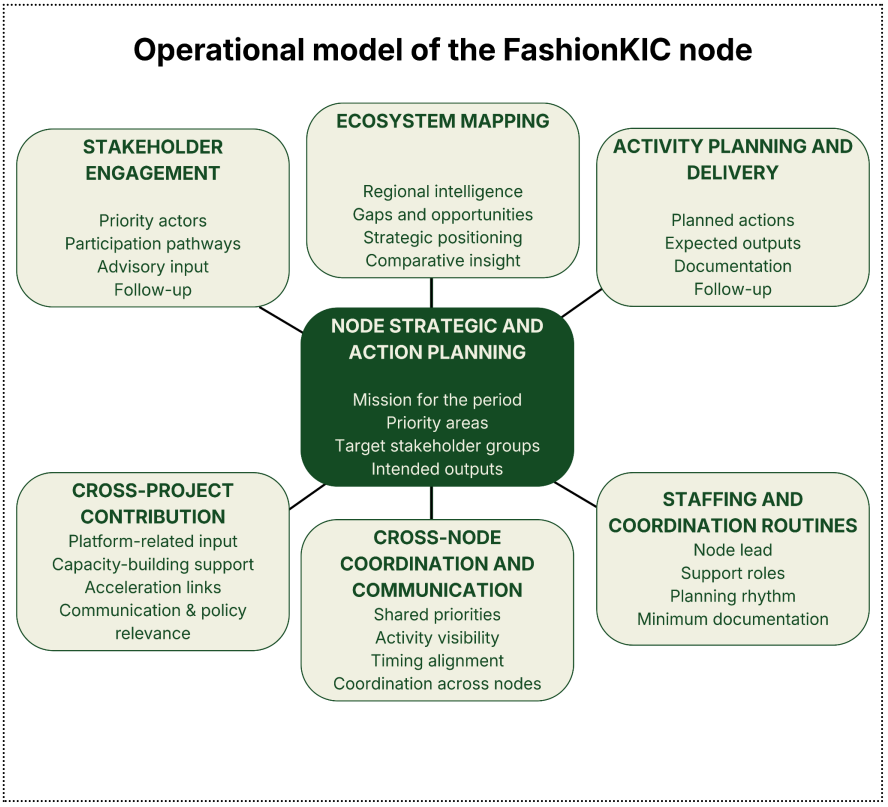

Figure 8. This diagram presents the operational model of the FashionKIC node as an interconnected system. It shows how strategic and action planning provides the basis for stakeholder engagement, ecosystem mapping, activity delivery, internal coordination, cross-project contribution and communication across the node network.

To support this, node implementation should not be driven by isolated activities alone, but by a periodically updated strategic and action planning logic that clarifies priorities, target groups, intended outputs, network complementarities and continuity direction. The sections below therefore explain not only how nodes engage stakeholders, plan activities and coordinate with one another, but also how they define priorities, position themselves within their ecosystems, and contribute to the wider project and network over time.

5.1 Stakeholder engagement model

Stakeholder engagement should be approached as purposeful and linked to concrete outputs, rather than as a broad consultation exercise without clear use. The role of engagement is to help nodes understand local priorities, test relevance, strengthen legitimacy, identify opportunities, and support implementation decisions with grounded ecosystem input.

Each node should therefore engage stakeholders in ways that are proportionate to the stage of implementation and to the practical value of the interaction. In some cases, this may involve bilateral conversations, targeted consultations or focused exchanges with priority actors. In others, it may involve advisory input, thematic discussions, workshops or participation in specific activities. What matters is that stakeholders are engaged with a clear purpose and that their input can be connected to actual node decisions, outputs or future actions.

The same principle applies to the Local Advisory Group. Advisory input should not become a formal routine without substance. It should be mobilised at moments where there is something meaningful to discuss, review or test — for example ecosystem mapping findings, priority areas, activity concepts, stakeholder gaps, emerging opportunities or continuity pathways. This helps ensure that advisory engagement remains relevant, manageable and useful within the project timeline.

Stakeholder engagement should also be structured around participation pathways. Stakeholders should be able to understand whether they are being approached as mapped actors, consultees, advisory contributors, participants in activities, potential partners, or contributors to longer-term node development. Clear participation pathways help convert general interest into useful engagement and reduce the risk of diffuse interaction without follow-up.

5.2 Integration with ecosystem mapping methodology

The operational model of the node is closely linked to the ecosystem mapping methodology developed under D2.2. Mapping should not be treated as a one-off research task undertaken in parallel to implementation. It is a core operational tool for node activation, prioritisation and decision-making. The three-layer approach

developed in WP2 supports this logic: Layer 1 provides the Ecosystem Mapping Canvas as a strategic and comparable overview; Layer 2 provides the supporting evidence base, including stakeholder data, references and contextual information; and Layer 3 provides a short interpretive synthesis that explains the regional ecosystem logic, key priorities, main gaps and strategic implications for node activation.

In practical terms, the mapping should inform at least five parts of node work. First, it should guide stakeholder prioritisation by identifying relevant actor categories, concentrations and gaps. Second, it should help determine thematic focus by highlighting opportunities, barriers and ecosystem needs. Third, it should inform activity planning by indicating which topics, formats or collaborations may be most useful. Fourth, it should support cross-node comparison and learning by making regional differences and complementarities visible. Fifth, it should provide evidence for later strategic and sustainability planning. In this structure, the third layer is especially useful because it translates raw mapping findings into a concise narrative that can be used for alignment, internal decision-making and communication across the network.

Because the nodes operate as part of a wider network, the mapping also has a comparative function. It helps make regional specificities visible while allowing nodes to identify complementarities across countries. One node may have stronger access to a certain type of actor, knowledge area or territorial dynamic, while another may be better positioned in a different part of the value chain. Making these differences visible is important for building a more strategic and connected network.

Because ecosystems evolve and node understanding becomes more precise over time, the mapping should be treated as a living operational reference. The one-page canvas may remain relatively stable for comparability, while the supporting evidence and the short interpretive synthesis may be updated when major developments occur or when new insight emerges from consultations, events or implementation experience.

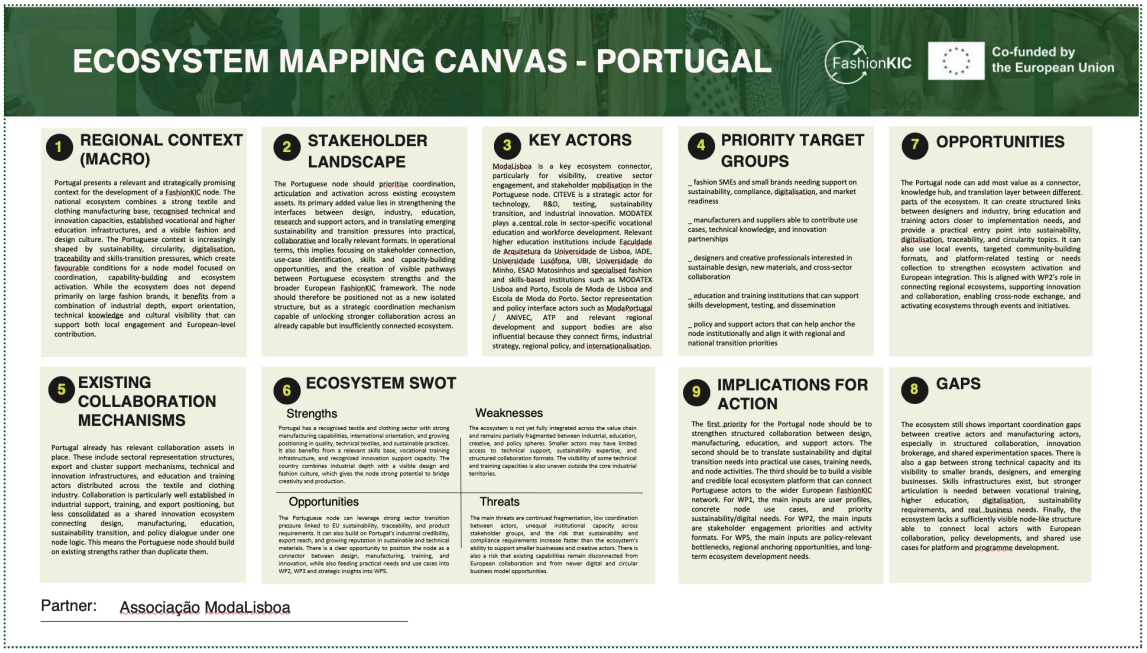

Figure 9. Ecosystem Mapping Canvas used in WP2 as the one-page strategic synthesis for each regional ecosystem.

5.3 Node strategic and action planning

To ensure that node implementation is not driven by isolated activities alone, each node should work on the basis of a short strategic and action planning logic for the relevant period. This should provide a clear reference for what the node is trying to achieve, which stakeholder groups it intends to prioritise, which parts of the ecosystem it aims to activate, and how its planned activities contribute both to local relevance and to the wider mission of FashionKIC.

This planning logic does not need to take the form of a complex business plan. It should instead function as a practical and periodically updated reference document that helps translate the common node framework into a more specific local direction. Depending on the stage of implementation, it may be prepared on an annual basis and reviewed on a semester basis where useful.

At a minimum, this planning should clarify the node's strategic focus for the period, priority stakeholder groups, intended activities or lines of action, expected outputs, relevant links to the wider project, and areas of complementarity with other nodes. It should also help identify where the node is seeking to create the greatest value in its ecosystem and how this may support longer-term positioning and continuity.

This planning logic is important not only for internal coordination, but also for cross-node visibility and meaningful stakeholder engagement. It creates a more structured basis for deciding what to prioritise, what to communicate, what to test with advisory input, and how local implementation should be understood in relation to the wider network.

A companion template for this purpose should form part of the node toolkit, so that nodes can document and share their priorities in a way that is practical, comparable and usable across the network.

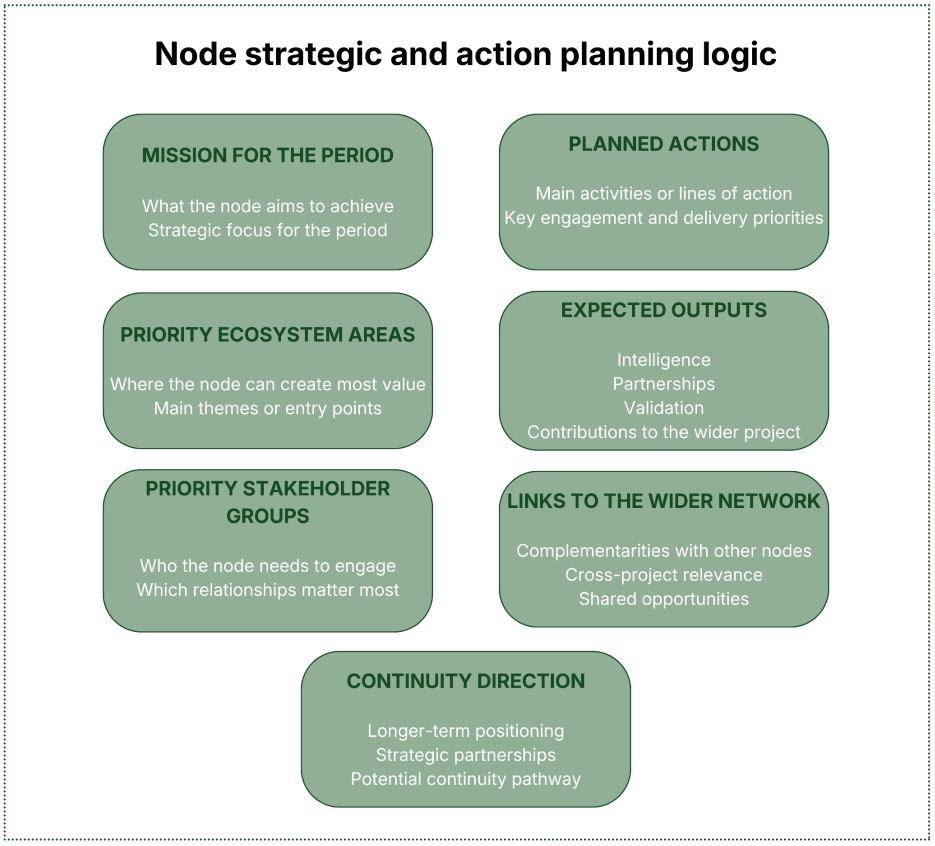

Figure 10. This diagram shows the planning logic that should guide node implementation over a defined period. It illustrates how each node can translate the common framework into a more specific local direction by clarifying priorities, stakeholder focus, intended actions, expected outputs, network links and continuity perspective.

5.4 Node contribution across the project

Although the FashionKIC nodes are established and structured through WP2, their function is not limited to WP2 alone. Once activated, nodes should be understood as transversal implementation interfaces that connect the wider project to regional ecosystems. Their value lies in helping different parts of FashionKIC engage relevant stakeholders, generate grounded intelligence, identify opportunities, test relevance and strengthen local anchoring.

In this sense, nodes may contribute across the project in different ways depending on timing, relevance and regional context. They may support platform-related work by helping surface ecosystem needs, user perspectives or testing opportunities; contribute to capacity-building and training activities by identifying local participants, themes or pilot environments; support acceleration-related work by connecting relevant entrepreneurs, innovators or

intermediaries; and contribute to communication, policy or ecosystem-building efforts by generating cases, relationships, visibility and regional insight.

This transversal role does not mean that nodes replace the responsibilities of individual work packages. Rather, they function as regional interfaces that help translate project objectives into more grounded and connected forms of implementation. Their role is to make the project more relevant, more embedded and more responsive to ecosystem realities.

For this reason, node teams should remain attentive to where local activities, stakeholder relationships or emerging insights may be useful beyond their immediate context. Likewise, other work packages should be able to engage with nodes where regional access, intelligence or mobilisation capacity is needed. In this way, the nodes contribute not only to WP2 delivery, but to the wider coherence, reach and effectiveness of FashionKIC as a whole.

5.5 Activity planning and delivery

As part of cross-node coordination, nodes should share a short strategic and action planning document for the relevant period, indicating their priorities, intended stakeholder groups, planned activities, expected outputs and areas of complementarity with the wider network.

Activity planning should be guided by both local relevance and network awareness. Before confirming significant activities, each node should clarify the purpose of the activity, the stakeholder groups it intends to engage, the expected output or learning, and any relevant links to the wider project.

Activities should be designed to generate usable outcomes rather than engagement without clear follow-up. Depending on their purpose, these outcomes may include stakeholder input, validation of assumptions, ecosystem intelligence, stronger relationships, follow-up opportunities, or contributions to other work packages. This is especially important in relation to consultation-based or advisory engagement, which should be activated when there is something meaningful to review, test, refine or inform.

Activity planning should also take into account the wider positioning of the node network. Because different nodes may be engaging different stakeholder groups, themes or regional entry points, activities should be planned with sufficient awareness of how they relate to the broader mission of the network. This does not require identical planning across countries, but it does require enough visibility to understand where complementarities, overlaps or useful sequencing may exist.

For this reason, nodes should share major upcoming activities, intended objectives and relevant target groups with one another early enough to support

coordination in advance. This should help make visible how local plans connect to the wider network, where activities may benefit from mutual visibility or alignment in timing, and where one node's work may generate insights, contacts or opportunities that are useful to another.

To support consistent exchange across the network, a partner communication template should be included in the node toolkit. This should help nodes share key information in a structured and comparable way, including planned activities, intended objectives, priority stakeholder groups, expected outputs, relevant dates, and key conclusions or follow-up points. The purpose of this template is not to create unnecessary reporting, but to make cross-node visibility, coordination and complementarity easier in day-to-day implementation.

A useful planning logic is therefore to define the objective, identify the relevant stakeholders, clarify the expected output, consider links to other nodes and work packages, and ensure that conclusions or next steps are captured in a way that can inform future action. In this way, node activities contribute not only to local implementation, but also to the wider coherence, learning and collective impact of the FashionKIC node network.

5.6 Staffing and coordination routines

The staffing model of each node should remain proportionate to available resources and institutional reality. A node does not require a large dedicated team to function credibly, but it does require clear responsibility and sufficient implementation support.

At a minimum, each node should designate one lead person responsible for coordination, supported as needed by internal colleagues or collaborators. What matters most is not team size, but role clarity, continuity of follow-up and the ability to maintain implementation momentum over time.

Each node should also maintain a light but reliable coordination routine. This should support planning, stakeholder follow-up, documentation, review and alignment with wider WP2 coordination, without creating unnecessary administrative burden. The specific rhythm may vary by node and delivery phase, but local implementation should remain sufficiently organised to support continuity, accountability and timely response to opportunities or risks.

A minimum documentation set should also be maintained to support implementation and review. This may include stakeholder tracking, short records of activities or key interactions, follow-up points, decisions where relevant, and notes on emerging opportunities, challenges or cross-node implications.

5.7 Cross-node coordination and communication

This section sets out the minimum operational logic through which nodes should communicate and coordinate with one another during implementation. Its focus is on practical alignment: sharing priorities, planned activities, target stakeholder groups, timing, dependencies and follow-up points early enough to support coordination across the network. The purpose of this coordination is to reduce fragmentation, make complementarities more visible, and ensure that local implementation remains connected to the wider rhythm and objectives of FashionKIC.

Because FashionKIC is intended to operate as a network, node-to-node communication should be treated as a core part of implementation rather than as an occasional exchange. Cross-node coordination is necessary to ensure visibility across the network, identify complementarities, avoid unnecessary overlap, and build a more global understanding of the network's collective reach and impact.

Nodes should share their priorities, planned activities, intended stakeholder groups, expected outputs and key conclusions with one another through regular coordination moments. This exchange should help nodes understand who is being engaged across the network, what themes and missions are being prioritised, how local timelines relate to one another, and where activities, contacts or insights may be mutually relevant.

Cross-node coordination should take place through regular coordination meetings, supported by shared planning and documentation tools and complemented, where needed, by email or other agreed communication channels. As a general baseline, node exchange should take place at least monthly during active implementation periods, with additional coordination where relevant activities, stakeholder groups, timelines or emerging opportunities require closer alignment.

These coordination moments should be used not only to exchange information, but also to cross-check timing and mission across nodes. In practice, this means understanding when activities in different regions may benefit from visibility or sequencing, where stakeholder groups or ecosystem actors may be relevant across borders, and how one node's work may support another's through complementary knowledge, contacts or thematic focus.

To support consistent exchange across the network, a partner communication template should form part of the node toolkit. This should help nodes share key information in a structured and comparable way, including planned activities, intended objectives, priority stakeholder groups, relevant dates, expected outputs, and key conclusions or follow-up points. Its purpose is not to create unnecessary reporting, but to support cross-node visibility, coordination and complementarity in day-to-day implementation.

Cross-node communication should therefore support three practical functions: first, visibility, by making priorities, activities and target groups visible across the network; second, complementarity, by helping nodes identify synergies, overlaps and shared opportunities; and third, alignment, by allowing timing, objectives and conclusions to be understood in relation to the wider mission of the network as a whole.

6. Sustainability Integration

This section defines the practical sustainability logic of the framework. It explains how sustainability should function as a cross-cutting operational filter through an ESG perspective, a value-chain lens and a materiality approach.

Partner feedback has highlighted the need to strengthen sustainability within the framework beyond generic references. This section therefore sets out the operational meaning of sustainability in the FashionKIC node model. Its purpose is not to turn D2.1 into a technical sustainability manual, but to ensure that governance, stakeholder engagement, mapping and activity planning are informed by a shared and usable sustainability logic.

Within FashionKIC, sustainability should be understood through an ESG perspective, interpreted through the realities of the fashion and textile value chain, and prioritised through a materiality lens. In practice, this means that nodes should be able to recognise environmental, social and governance dimensions, consider where relevant actors sit in the value chain, and identify which issues are most relevant in their ecosystem. This matters because the participating regions differ significantly in specialisation, from design and cultural production to manufacturing, education, entrepreneurship and policy support.

6.1 ESG perspective

An ESG perspective expands sustainability beyond environmental performance alone. Environmental issues remain central, including material use, waste, circularity, emissions, water and chemical impacts. However, social and governance dimensions are equally relevant in fashion ecosystems. Social issues include labour conditions, skills, inclusion, diversity, local value creation, access to opportunity and fairness in supply-chain relations. Governance issues include traceability, transparency, accountability, compliance, decision integrity and institutional capacity to manage transition.

Applying an ESG perspective at node level does not require each node to become a technical expert on every sustainability topic. It requires nodes to ask better questions, involve a broader set of relevant actors and avoid reducing sustainability to a narrow environmental discourse disconnected from economic and social realities. In practice, ESG should influence stakeholder selection, mapping categories, discussion prompts, event themes and the interpretation of ecosystem needs and opportunities.

6.2 Value-chain approach

FashionKIC works across a sector in which sustainability challenges and innovation opportunities vary significantly across the value chain. A value-chain approach is therefore necessary if node activities are to remain relevant and avoid over-generalisation. Depending on the region, greater attention may be needed in relation to textile production, garment manufacturing, design practices, retail systems, logistics, repair and reuse ecosystems or end-of-life solutions. The framework should allow for these differences without losing coherence.

The value-chain lens is especially useful for stakeholder engagement. It helps nodes identify which parts of the ecosystem are visible and connected, which are under-represented, and where structural gaps may limit transformation. It also helps avoid a common bias toward the most visible actors, such as designers and brands, when deeper change may depend on manufacturers, suppliers, education actors, public authorities, social innovators or technology providers.

In operational terms, the value-chain approach should be reflected in mapping, advisory group composition, theme selection for activities and interpretation of regional specialisation. It is also useful for cross-node comparison, since one region's strength may complement another region's gap.

6.3 Materiality approach

A materiality approach means that nodes should not assume identical sustainability priorities across regions. Instead, they should identify which issues are most significant in relation to ecosystem structure, stakeholder concern, innovation opportunity and the strategic direction of FashionKIC. Material issues may differ across Portugal, Greece, Romania and Spain, and they may also evolve during implementation as understanding deepens.

Materiality is operationally useful because it avoids two opposite mistakes: treating sustainability as too broad to guide action, or imposing a fixed agenda that ignores local reality. For example, a region with a stronger manufacturing profile may prioritise resource efficiency, traceability, workforce transition or compliance readiness. A region with stronger design and education ecosystems may prioritise design methods, curriculum innovation, experimentation or

business-model change. Both may be fully aligned with FashionKIC, provided the rationale is explicit.

Nodes should therefore use materiality as a prioritisation tool. It should inform which stakeholders are engaged most intensively, which themes are foregrounded in events, which opportunities are pursued in cross-WP work and which narratives are used in communication.

6.4 EU regulatory and policy awareness

The framework should also recognise that sustainable fashion transformation is increasingly shaped by the European regulatory and policy landscape. Even where nodes are not directly responsible for policy interpretation, they operate in a context influenced by the European Green Deal, the EU Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles, eco-design developments, product traceability discussions, corporate reporting requirements and due-diligence expectations. This context affects stakeholder concerns, innovation demand and institutional interest.

For node operations, regulatory awareness has two practical implications. First, nodes should engage not only market actors but also public and intermediary actors who can support interpretation, implementation and strategic alignment. Second, nodes can act as translation spaces where European ambitions and regional conditions are connected through dialogue, experimentation and shared intelligence. This also creates a natural bridge between WP2 and the policy and scaling work of WP5.

6.5 Sustainability in node governance and operations

The sustainability perspective described above should be visible in four parts of node practice. First, in governance: advisory groups and working groups should include relevant sustainability perspectives where possible. Second, in mapping: nodes should consider ESG dimensions, value-chain positioning and material issues when identifying opportunities and gaps. Third, in activities: event formats and engagement processes should surface practical transition challenges and opportunities, not only abstract commitments. Fourth, in continuity planning: the long-term relevance of a node will depend partly on its ability to respond credibly to the sustainability transition needs of its ecosystem.

This framework therefore proposes that sustainability be treated as a cross-cutting operational filter. Before major activities or decisions are confirmed, node leads should ask three practical questions: which sustainability dimensions are most relevant here; which value-chain actors or implications are involved; and why is this issue material in this region at this stage. This light-touch routine is sufficient to improve coherence without over-bureaucratising delivery.

7. Monitoring, Quality Assurance and Learning

This section sets out the minimum logic required for monitoring, quality assurance and learning across the FashionKIC node network. Its purpose is to ensure that node activities, outputs and stakeholder engagement can be documented, reviewed and improved in a way that is proportionate, usable and aligned with the wider project framework.

The Grant Agreement explicitly refers to quality assurance and performance assessment within the framework. These functions should therefore be implemented in close alignment with WP7, which provides the wider project approach to monitoring, review and evaluation. At node level, the objective is not to create a separate evaluation system, but to ensure that node implementation can be tracked, reviewed and improved in a consistent and decision-useful way.

Each node should maintain a light but disciplined monitoring routine. At a minimum, this should include a record of activities delivered, stakeholder profiles engaged, follow-up actions taken, links to work package objectives, key outputs or insights generated, and emerging risks or opportunities. This record does not need to be complex, but it should be updated regularly enough to support reporting, internal review and coordination with WP2 and WP7.

Quality assurance should be embedded in implementation rather than treated as a separate administrative exercise. In practice, this means that activities and outputs should be prepared with sufficient clarity, relevant materials should be reviewed before use or dissemination where appropriate, and feedback should be incorporated in a timely way. For substantial deliverables and methodological outputs, the review and validation logic established under WP7 should apply. For local activities and node-level implementation, a lighter internal routine may be sufficient, provided that accountability, documentation and follow-up remain clear.

Learning is a distinct but related function. Nodes should not only record what happened, but also extract what was learned about stakeholder motivation, effective formats, ecosystem dynamics, sustainability priorities and cross-project needs. This learning should be fed back into future planning, cross-node exchange and the ongoing development of the node network, so that implementation can improve over time rather than simply be documented after the fact.

7.1 Minimum KPI and monitoring logic

To support consistent implementation across nodes, the framework should be accompanied by a minimum KPI and monitoring logic. The purpose is not to create a heavy measurement system, but to ensure that node performance can be understood in relation to both the Grant requirements and the practical objectives of WP2.

At grant level, the most explicit node-related indicators are the establishment and operation of four regional nodes, the delivery of eight regional events across the network with at least twenty stakeholders engaged in each, and the development of four sustainability roadmaps, one per node. In addition, WP2 requires each region to identify a minimum of thirty key stakeholders and to establish a local advisory group with five representatives from different stakeholder categories. These requirements should form the baseline reference for node monitoring.

For operational purposes, node monitoring should combine these grant-linked indicators with a small set of implementation indicators that help assess whether the node is functioning effectively in practice. These indicators should cover five dimensions: node establishment and governance, stakeholder engagement, activity delivery, cross-project contribution, and continuity or anchoring.

A minimum KPI set may therefore include the following:

Node establishment and governance

- node lead designated
- governance structure in place
- Local Advisory Group established
- participation in agreed coordination and review processes

Stakeholder engagement

- minimum 30 key stakeholders identified through mapping
- diversity of stakeholder categories represented
- number of stakeholders actively engaged
- number of follow-up actions completed
- advisory input activated at relevant implementation moments

Activity delivery

- number and type of node activities delivered
- number of participants engaged per activity
- evidence that activities generated usable outputs, insights or follow-up
- contribution to the network target of 8 regional events, with at least 20 stakeholders engaged in each event

Cross-project contribution

- Instances where node activity contributed to other project activities, such as platform development, training and capacity-building, acceleration support, communication, policy dialogue or ecosystem-building
- ecosystem intelligence or stakeholder connections generated for wider project use
- participation in cross-node exchange and shared learning processes

Continuity and anchoring

- evidence of strategic local partnerships or continuity partners
- contribution to the development of the node sustainability roadmap
- alignment with regional strengths, opportunities or longer-term positioning

These indicators should be used as management tools as well as reporting tools. Their role is to help node teams understand whether they are reaching the right actors, generating useful outputs, maintaining follow-up, contributing to the wider project and building enough local relevance to support continuity beyond one-off activities. Where possible, KPI tracking should remain aligned with the wider monitoring logic of WP7, including periodic updates, risk flagging and evidence-based review.

Monitoring should therefore not be treated only as retrospective reporting. It should also function as an operational tool for identifying gaps in engagement, imbalances across stakeholder groups, weak follow-up, coordination bottlenecks or missed opportunities for cross-node or cross-project contribution. In this way, monitoring, quality assurance and learning support both accountability and better implementation across the node network.

To support consistent implementation across the network, the node toolkit should include simple templates for monitoring, quality assurance and learning. These should help node teams record activities, stakeholder engagement, outputs, follow-up points, lessons learned and any relevant risks or quality issues in a structured and comparable way. Their purpose is not to create unnecessary reporting, but to support reflection, continuity, cross-node comparability and alignment with the wider project monitoring logic.

8. Cross-Node Collaboration and Knowledge Exchange

This section explains how collaboration and knowledge exchange between nodes should contribute to the wider value of the FashionKIC network beyond day-to-day coordination alone. While Section 5.7 focuses on operational communication and alignment, this section focuses on structured learning, transfer of practice and the collective improvement of node implementation over time.

Cross-node collaboration should build on the different strengths, entry points and ecosystem positions of the four nodes. Because the participating regions are not identical in terms of stakeholder base, value-chain position, institutional context or thematic focus, the network should treat these differences as a source of complementarity rather than as a barrier to coherence. One node may generate insights, contacts, formats or opportunities that are directly useful to another, and the value of the network depends in part on making these complementarities visible and actionable.

Knowledge exchange should therefore go beyond simple information-sharing. Its purpose is to help nodes compare implementation experience, understand why certain approaches are working in one context and not in another, identify transferable practices, and recognise where common patterns or shared challenges are emerging across the network. In this way, collaboration between nodes supports both local adaptation and network-level learning.

In practical terms, cross-node knowledge exchange should rely on a light but structured set of formats. As a minimum, nodes should participate in one structured peer-learning session per semester, focused on implementation experience, lessons learned, useful practices, common bottlenecks and emerging opportunities across the network. In addition, nodes should share short post-activity debriefs after significant activities where the experience may be useful to other nodes, especially where activities generate relevant stakeholder insight, effective formats, useful contacts, lessons on participation or issues that may recur elsewhere.

Where useful, more focused thematic exchange sessions may also be organised on an as-needed basis around specific operational topics, such as stakeholder

engagement, advisory group activation, sustainability priorities, activity design, ecosystem mapping interpretation, or contribution to other parts of the project. These exchanges do not need to be highly formalised, but they should remain purposeful and linked to concrete implementation questions. This responds to the wider WP2 objective of enabling knowledge exchange between nodes as part of the network logic.

To make knowledge exchange usable, outputs should be captured in a simple and structured way. This may include short debrief notes, transferable practice points, lessons learned, useful contacts, recurring risks, successful engagement approaches, or recommendations for future action. These outputs should not remain as stand-alone records. Where relevant, they should feed back into node strategic and action planning, activity design, stakeholder engagement approaches, advisory group use, and cross-node coordination priorities, so that learning becomes visible in future implementation choices.

A small number of practical tools should support this process within the node toolkit. These may include a post-activity debrief template, a shared learning log, and a short semester learning summary to help capture what should be retained, transferred or adapted across the network. Their purpose is not to create unnecessary reporting, but to ensure that distributed implementation generates cumulative value over time.

Cross-node collaboration is also important for visibility and strategic positioning. When nodes understand each other's experiences, results and emerging directions, they are better able to communicate the value of the network as a whole, identify shared narratives and show how local action contributes to a broader European mission. In this sense, knowledge exchange is not only a support function for implementation; it is part of how FashionKIC develops as a connected and credible network.

For this reason, cross-node knowledge exchange should be treated as an ongoing implementation practice rather than as an occasional add-on. Its detailed mechanisms may evolve over time, but the principle should remain stable: nodes should generate value not only through what they do in their own territories, but also through what they make possible for the wider network through reflection, transfer and mutual learning.

9. Long-Term Anchoring and Continuity

This section outlines the operating conditions that can help nodes build relevance, legitimacy and continuity beyond the funded period. It frames continuity not as a later add-on, but as something that should be strengthened through implementation from the outset.

Continuity will not depend only on whether activities are delivered during the project period, but on whether each node becomes recognised as a useful and credible interface within its regional ecosystem. A node that is unclear in purpose, weakly positioned in its territory, or dependent only on short-term project routines will be difficult to sustain beyond the funded period. For this reason, long-term anchoring should be considered throughout implementation rather than only at a later stage.

In practice, continuity will depend first on institutional relevance, and only then on financial continuity. Each node should therefore treat its major activities not only as project outputs, but also as opportunities to demonstrate value, strengthen legitimacy and deepen strategic relationships. Advisory structures, public institutions, education and research actors, clusters, intermediary organisations, businesses and other engaged stakeholders should be understood not only as participants, but also as potential continuity partners.

Continuity also depends on strategic positioning. Nodes should pay attention to where they are creating the greatest value, which parts of the ecosystem they are becoming most relevant to, and which relationships may become important beyond the immediate project cycle. This makes alignment with regional priorities, ecosystem needs and wider development agendas strategically important. A node is more likely to endure if it becomes recognised as a meaningful and useful interface, rather than only as a temporary project mechanism.

The node model proposed in this framework supports continuity by emphasising clarity of purpose, collaborative governance, ecosystem relevance, evidence generation and adaptable operating routines. These qualities help create the

conditions under which nodes may continue to evolve beyond the funded period, regardless of the institutional form or sustainability model that may emerge later.

In practical terms, continuity may take different forms depending on the regional and institutional context. For example, a node may become more formally embedded within the programming of its host organisation; evolve into a recognised collaboration mechanism linked to a regional cluster, intermediary or education platform; or maintain continuity through a stable set of strategic partnerships, recurring activities or shared regional priorities that remain useful beyond the project cycle. The objective is not to prescribe one continuity model for all nodes, but to ensure that implementation creates credible pathways through which node value can endure after the funded period.

For this reason, continuity should be understood not as a final-stage concern, but as an operational consideration that informs how nodes are positioned, activated and developed over time.

10. Implementation Roadmap

This section sets out how the framework should be used in practice during node implementation. Its purpose is not to impose a rigid sequence, but to provide a shared implementation logic that helps nodes move from initial set-up to more structured activation, coordination and continuity.

The roadmap should be read in alignment with the overall duration of the project, which runs from M1 to M24, and with the timing of the main WP2 outputs. In operational terms, four broad phases can be distinguished: an initial set-up phase from M1 to M5, a mapping and activation preparation phase from M6 to M8, an active implementation and cross-node collaboration phase from M9 to M20, and a final consolidation and continuity phase from M21 to M24. This sequencing is consistent with the timing of the node framework, ecosystem mapping, local activation, knowledge exchange and later strategic development work foreseen in WP2.

In the set-up phase (M1-M5), priority should be given to confirming node roles, clarifying institutional anchoring, establishing the basic governance structure, identifying the node lead, and preparing the initial operating conditions for implementation. This is also the phase in which the common framework is

developed and adopted as the shared basis for node operation. At this stage, nodes should begin early stakeholder identification and internal positioning work, but the main priority is to create enough clarity for coherent implementation across countries.

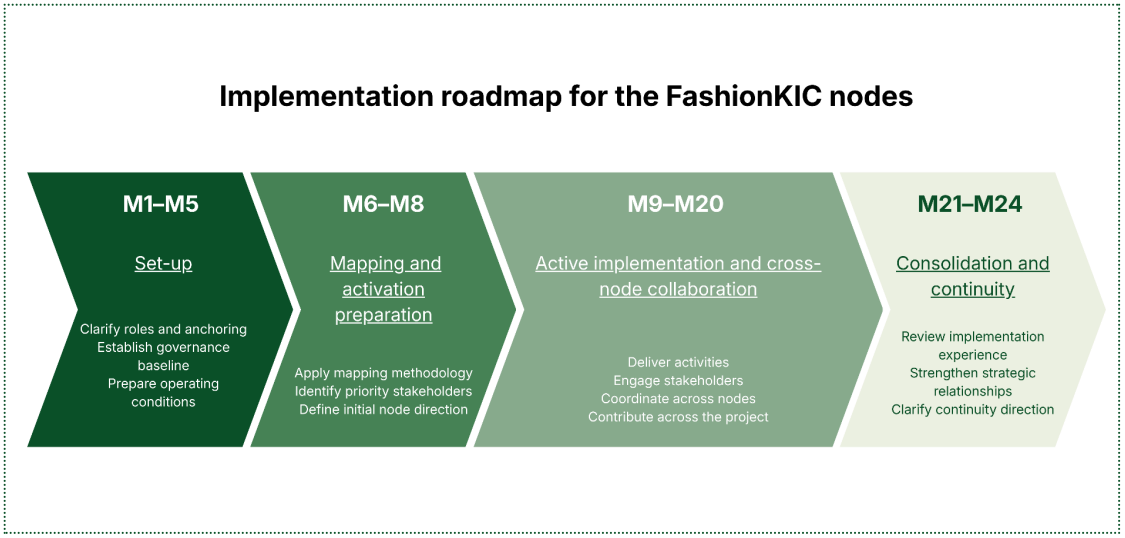

Figure 11. This diagram presents the implementation roadmap for the FashionKIC nodes across the project period. It shows how node development moves from set-up and mapping to active implementation, cross-node collaboration and longer-term consolidation, while remaining open to review and refinement over time.

In the mapping and activation preparation phase (M6-M8), focus should move to applying the ecosystem mapping methodology, identifying priority stakeholder groups, validating the local advisory logic, and translating ecosystem intelligence into an initial strategic and action direction for each node. This phase should also prepare the ground for more structured local activity by clarifying where the node can create the greatest value, which ecosystem segments it should prioritise, and which relationships are most important to activate first. The timing is especially relevant because the ecosystem mapping reports are due in M8, making this the period in which local positioning should become much more concrete.

In the active implementation and cross-node collaboration phase (M9-M20), the emphasis should shift to regular stakeholder engagement, delivery of node activities, contribution to the wider project, structured exchange between nodes, and systematic documentation of outputs, learning and follow-up. This is the phase in which nodes should operate most actively as interfaces between their regional ecosystems and the wider FashionKIC architecture. It is also the phase in which interfaces with capacity-building activity, acceleration-related engagement, platform testing and communication become more relevant, since WP3 begins in M3, WP4 in M8 and WP5 in M12. By M20, nodes should also have generated enough implementation experience to support the cross-node knowledge exchange methodology and local activation reporting foreseen for that stage.

In the consolidation and continuity phase (M21-M24), attention should increasingly turn to synthesis, strategic reflection and longer-term positioning.

This phase should build on the evidence, relationships and implementation experience generated earlier in the project in order to clarify continuity pathways, strategic development options and the node's potential relevance beyond the immediate funded period. Although WP2 is shown in the project overview as running to M20, the wider project continues to M24 and includes later work on node strategic development, sustainability and policy integration, which means the final phase should be used to connect operational learning with longer-term direction rather than treating implementation as complete once activities slow down.

Across all phases, implementation should remain iterative rather than strictly linear. Nodes should periodically review their priorities in light of ecosystem developments, stakeholder feedback, implementation experience and exchange with other nodes. Minor operational refinements may be handled locally where they improve relevance and delivery. More substantial changes affecting common standards, methodological coherence or wider network alignment should be made visible through WP2 coordination and the relevant project-level coordination structures. This is particularly important in a project where monitoring, quality assurance and risk management are expected to run throughout the full project period.

The framework should therefore be understood as a practical implementation reference that remains stable in its core logic while supporting adjustment through use. Applied together with the visual operational manual and the node toolkit, it should help nodes pace their development, coordinate more coherently across the network, and build stronger conditions for relevance, comparability and continuity over time.

10.1 Implementation risks and mitigation logic

This section outlines the main implementation risks that may affect the effective functioning of the FashionKIC nodes and the wider coherence of the network. Its purpose is not to create a heavy risk-management system, but to ensure that predictable challenges are recognised early enough to support timely mitigation and more stable implementation. A summary table of key implementation risks and mitigation measures is provided in Annex VI.

Node implementation takes place across different regional ecosystems, institutional realities and delivery conditions. For this reason, some variation in pace, emphasis and local operating conditions is expected. At the same time, the framework depends on a minimum level of consistency, visibility and coordination across nodes. Risk management should therefore focus on issues that may weaken node relevance, disrupt implementation, reduce comparability or limit the network value of the overall model.

The main implementation risks are likely to include weak institutional anchoring, diffuse or shallow stakeholder engagement, over-concentration in a narrow set of actors, lack of clarity in node priorities, fragmented activity planning, weak cross-node visibility, insufficient documentation, limited follow-up capacity, and ambiguity in decision-making or escalation. There is also a risk that sustainability is treated too broadly or too superficially if it is not translated into concrete priorities, stakeholder choices and activity design.

Mitigation should rely primarily on light but explicit management measures. These include clear role allocation, basic governance structures, periodic strategic and action planning, purposeful stakeholder engagement, early sharing of priorities and activities across nodes, regular coordination, minimum documentation practices, and timely escalation where issues may affect wider coherence or delivery quality.

Risk management should be treated as part of implementation rather than as a separate administrative layer. In practice, this means that node teams should periodically review where bottlenecks, imbalances, delays or coordination gaps are emerging and use this reflection to adjust priorities, strengthen follow-up or seek support where needed. A compact risk and mitigation table should also be maintained in annex form to support implementation and review.

11. Conclusion

This section closes the framework by restating its practical purpose and the conditions under which it can support coherent node implementation over time. It brings together the document's core logic: a common but adaptable operating model, locally grounded node action, stronger cross-node coordination, and a more credible basis for long-term relevance and continuity.

The FashionKIC Node Operational Framework provides the common reference architecture for establishing and operating the project's transnational network of innovation nodes. It translates the shared ambition of FashionKIC into an operational model that is clear enough to support consistency across regions and flexible enough to remain relevant in different ecosystem contexts.

The framework defines the node not as a fixed institutional template, but as a locally anchored interface for activation, collaboration, intelligence generation and implementation across the wider project. In doing so, it clarifies what should remain common across the network, what may be adapted to regional conditions,

and how nodes can contribute both to local ecosystem value and to the wider European mission of FashionKIC.

It also positions node implementation as something that should be guided not only by individual activities, but by a more structured strategic and action logic. This helps ensure that stakeholder engagement, ecosystem mapping, activity planning, cross-node coordination and contribution to the wider project are part of a coherent implementation approach rather than a set of disconnected actions.

The framework further strengthens the role of sustainability by embedding ESG, value-chain and materiality perspectives into the way nodes define priorities, engage stakeholders and position themselves within their ecosystems. This reinforces the relevance of the node model to the wider transition challenges facing the European fashion and textile sector.

Ultimately, the value of this framework will depend not only on its content, but on its use. Applied together with the visual operational manual and the node toolkit, it is intended to support more grounded decisions, stronger coordination, greater comparability across nodes and more credible conditions for long-term continuity. Used in this way, it can serve not only as a project deliverable, but as a practical foundation for a distributed and adaptive European network for sustainable fashion innovation.

Annex I. Roles and Responsibilities Matrix

The table below summarises the primary functional responsibilities within the FashionKIC node model. It is intended as a practical reference and should be read together with the governance and operational sections of the framework.

Function	Primary responsibility	Typical actors	Notes
Strategic oversight	Validate node priorities, major partnerships and significant changes	Node Governing Body / host institution leadership	Should ensure alignment with common framework and regional positioning.
Operational coordination	Plan and manage day-to-day node implementation	Node Management Team	Main liaison with WP2 coordination and other WPs.
Stakeholder engagement	Map, prioritise and manage ecosystem relationships	Node lead with support team	Should include follow-up, documentation and participation pathways.
Advisory input	Provide ecosystem feedback and legitimacy	Local Advisory Group	Non-executive role; supports relevance and external anchoring.
Methodological coherence	Maintain common approach across nodes	WP2 coordination (MODALISBOA)	Focus on alignment, validation and cross-node consistency rather than centralised execution.
Project-level quality and escalation	Ensure overall quality, risk handling and grant alignment	WP7 structures led by Envolve	Applies when issues exceed node or WP2 scope.

Annex II. Decision and Escalation Matrix

The following matrix distinguishes the main categories of decisions expected under the node model and indicates the appropriate level of responsibility.

Decision area	Default level	Consultation/validation	Escalation trigger
Node strategy and periodic priorities	Node Governing Body	Node Management Team; advisory input where relevant	Escalate if affecting common framework or major project commitments.
Activity planning and delivery formats	Node Management Team	Relevant working group / WP counterparts	Escalate if implications extend to other nodes or work packages.
Ecosystem mapping interpretation and updates	Node Management Team	Advisory input; WP2 methodological alignment	Escalate if comparability or methodology integrity is affected.
Major partnerships and formal commitments	Node Governing Body	Node Management Team and relevant WP leads	Escalate if commitments create legal, reputational or grant-related implications.
Exceptions to minimum standards	WP2 coordination review	Node lead explains rationale	Escalate to WP7 / consortium level if risk or compliance issues arise.
Quality concerns or delivery delays	Node Management Team in first instance	WP2 coordination	Escalate when risk affects milestones, deliverables or stakeholder trust.

Annex III. Minimum Standards and Implementation Checklist for Nodes

This checklist is intended as a practical implementation and review tool for node leads, host organisations and WP2 coordination. It translates the framework into a more detailed set of minimum operating conditions that can be used to assess node readiness, monitor implementation progress and identify areas requiring follow-up or support.

Area	Requirement	Expected standard / evidence	Assessed by	Status / notes
Node set-up and anchoring	Node lead designated	One clearly identified focal point with strategic and operational responsibility	Host organisation / WP2 coordination	**Not started** **In progress** **In place** **Needs attention**
	Host organisation confirmed	Institutional anchoring of the node is clear and internally recognised	Host organisation	
	Basic implementation capacity in place	Minimum support available for planning, outreach, delivery and reporting	Host organisation / node lead	
	Node positioning clarified	Basic articulation of the node's role, focus and relevance in the regional ecosystem	Node lead / WP2 coordination	
	Governance logic clarified	Strategic, operational and	Host organisation /	

Governance and advisory structure		advisory functions are distinguishable	WP2 coordination	
	Node Management Team functioning	Day-to-day coordination responsibility and support roles are clear	Node lead	
	Local Advisory Group established	At least 5 representatives from different stakeholder categories	Node lead / WP2 coordination	
	Advisory Group composition is balanced	Diversity of relevant profiles represented across the ecosystem	Node lead / WP2 coordination	
	Advisory engagement logic defined	Clear purpose for when and how advisory input will be activated	Node lead	
Stakeholder engagement and mapping	Stakeholder base mapped	Minimum 30 key stakeholders identified through D2.2 methodology	Node lead / WP2 coordination	
	Stakeholder diversity covered	Relevant ecosystem categories are represented in the mapping	Node lead / WP2 coordination	
	Priority stakeholders identified	Node has a clearer prioritisation beyond the full stakeholder map	Node lead	
	Engagement pathways defined	Stakeholders can be engaged as consultees, advisory contributors, participants, partners,	Node lead	

		testers or other relevant roles		
	Stakeholder tracking in place	Engagement status, follow-up and relevance can be recorded and reviewed	Node lead	
Strategic and action planning	Strategic and action planning document in place	Node priorities, target groups, intended activities and expected outputs are documented for the relevant period	Node lead / WP2 coordination	
	Links to wider project identified	Relevant interfaces with other WPs are visible in planning	Node lead / relevant WP leads	
	Cross-node complementarities considered	Planning reflects potential links, timing or shared interests across nodes	Node lead / WP2 coordination	
	Continuity perspective considered	Planning reflects possible continuity partners, anchoring or longer-term relevance	Node lead / host organisation	
Activity planning and delivery	Activity planning routine in place	Significant activities are prepared with objective, target group, expected output and follow-up logic	Node lead	
	Activities linked to node priorities	Activity design reflects strategic focus rather than isolated	Node lead / WP2 coordination	

		delivery		
	Documentation of activities in place	Short record of delivery, participation, outputs and next steps maintained	Node lead	
	Post-activity follow-up occurs	Relevant outputs, contacts or actions are followed up after activities	Node lead	
	Minimum node activation capacity exists	Node can host or coordinate stakeholder-facing activities credibly	Node lead / host organisation	
Cross-node coordination and knowledge exchange	Participation in WP2 coordination maintained	Node participates in agreed coordination and review processes	WP2 coordination	
	Major priorities and activities shared	Relevant activities, objectives and target groups are shared with other nodes in advance where useful	Node lead / WP2 coordination	
	Cross-node knowledge exchange supported	Learning, useful practices or transferable insights are captured and shared	Node lead / WP2 coordination	
	Shared templates or tools used where relevant	Node uses agreed toolkit elements for coordination and comparability	Node lead / WP2 coordination	
	Monitoring routine in place	Activities, engagement, outputs, follow-up and	Node lead	

		emerging issues are recorded on an ongoing basis		
	KPI tracking initiated	Minimum KPI set is being used as a light management and reporting tool	Node lead / WP2 coordination	
	Quality assurance routine in place	Key outputs and activities are reviewed proportionately before use or submission	Node lead / WP2 coordination	
	Learning captured	Lessons learned, useful formats and emerging bottlenecks are documented	Node lead	
Monitoring, quality assurance and learning Sustainability integration	Risks and issues flagged where needed	Relevant implementation risks are visible and escalated when necessary	Node lead / WP2 coordination	
	Sustainability filter applied in planning	ESG, value-chain and materiality perspectives are considered when setting priorities and planning activities	Node lead	
	Sustainability reflected in stakeholder engagement	Relevant sustainability-related perspectives or actors are included where appropriate	Node lead	
	Sustainability reflected in activity design	Activities address relevant transition challenges or opportunities in	Node lead	

		a practical way		
Cross-WP contribution and continuity	Cross-WP interfaces active	Relevant links maintained with WP1, WP3, WP4, WP5, WP6 and WP7	Node lead / relevant WP leads	
	Ecosystem intelligence is usable beyond the node	Relevant insights or contacts can inform wider project work	Node lead / WP2 coordination	
	Strategic local partnerships identified	Potential continuity or anchoring partners are visible	Node lead / host organisation	
	Continuity considerations documented	Node has reflected on possible post-project relevance or continuation pathways	Node lead / host organisation / WP2 coordination	

Annex IV. Glossary of Terms

This glossary provides a shared reference for the main terms used in the FashionKIC Node Operational Framework. Its purpose is to support consistent interpretation across partners, nodes and related WP2 outputs. The definitions below are operational in nature: they are intended to guide implementation and coordination rather than to provide exhaustive theoretical definitions. The glossary also includes brief descriptions of the FashionKIC work packages and key WP2 deliverables to support common project understanding.

Table 1. Core Terms

Term	Definition
Activation	The process through which a node turns mapped stakeholders and ecosystem intelligence into actual participation, interaction and project-relevant activity. It includes outreach, consultations, convening, testing, collaboration and follow-up.
Activity planning	The structured preparation of a node activity, including purpose, target stakeholders, expected contribution to project objectives, responsibilities and documentation method.
Adaptive governance	A governance approach that combines a stable common framework with the ability to adjust priorities, formats or routines in response to implementation experience, ecosystem change or emerging needs.
Advisory input	Non-executive feedback, challenge and strategic guidance provided to the node by external actors, usually through the Local Advisory Group or targeted consultations.
Capacity building	Activities that strengthen knowledge, skills and capabilities among relevant stakeholders. In FashionKIC, this is especially linked to WP3 and may include learning formats, pilot training environments and local participation pathways.
Common elements	The features of the node model that must remain consistent across all nodes in order to ensure network coherence, comparability and minimum operating quality.

Common framework	The shared operational architecture that defines how FashionKIC nodes are expected to function across countries while still allowing justified regional adaptation.
Comparability	The degree to which node structures, processes or outputs can be meaningfully understood, reviewed or compared across regions because they follow a shared framework and common minimum standards.
Compliance	Alignment with the Grant Agreement, project obligations, agreed methodologies, review procedures and consortium governance rules.
Consortium	The full set of partner organisations formally participating in FashionKIC under the Grant Agreement.
Continuity partner	A stakeholder or institutional actor with the potential to support the longer-term relevance, anchoring or sustainability of the node beyond the funded project period. Continuity partners may include public authorities, educational institutions, clusters, intermediary organisations, businesses or other actors able to reinforce the node's long-term positioning and value.
Coordination routine	A recurring set of planning, review and follow-up practices used by a node to maintain continuity, alignment and delivery discipline.
Cross-node collaboration	Structured exchange, comparison, learning and joint reflection between nodes in order to generate European added value from regionally anchored implementation.
Decision-making logic	The structure through which different categories of decisions are assigned to the appropriate level of responsibility, validation or escalation.
Deliverable	A formal project output required under the Grant Agreement and submitted according to the agreed timeline and review process.
Dissemination	Activities aimed at communicating project results, opportunities or learning to relevant audiences. In FashionKIC, dissemination is especially linked to WP6 but may also be supported by node activity.
Documentation routine	The regular recording of activities, stakeholder interactions, outputs, feedback, lessons learned and follow-up actions in a way that supports monitoring and quality assurance.

Ecosystem	The network of actors, institutions, relationships, capabilities and contextual conditions shaping fashion and textile innovation in a given region.
Ecosystem activation	The practical process of mobilising ecosystem actors into dialogue, participation and collaborative activity around FashionKIC objectives.
Ecosystem intelligence	Usable insight produced through mapping, consultations, activities and stakeholder engagement about regional assets, barriers, opportunities, needs and priorities.
Ecosystem Mapping Canvas	The one-page strategic overview used in WP2 to capture the core structure, features and priorities of a regional ecosystem in a comparable way across nodes.
Ecosystem mapping	The structured process of identifying and analysing stakeholders, system features, strengths, gaps and opportunities within a regional ecosystem in order to inform node strategy and implementation.
Engagement pathway	The planned sequence through which a stakeholder moves from identification and first contact to a more defined role such as consultee, advisory member, participant, tester, pilot contributor or longer-term partner.
Escalation	The process of raising an issue, risk or decision beyond the default node level because it cannot be resolved locally or may affect compliance, quality, timelines, comparability or other work packages.
ESG	A sustainability perspective covering environmental, social and governance dimensions. In this framework, ESG is used as a practical lens for mapping, stakeholder engagement, activity design and interpretation of ecosystem priorities.
FashionKIC node	A locally anchored operational interface through which FashionKIC connects with regional ecosystems, activates stakeholders, generates intelligence and supports implementation across the wider project.
Framework-affecting decision	A decision that may alter minimum standards, methodological coherence, comparability, delivery quality or the common operating logic of the node network, and therefore requires WP2 review and possibly further escalation.

Governance	The structures, roles, responsibilities and decision arrangements through which a node or the wider project is directed, managed, reviewed and held accountable.
Governance levels	The distinct layers of responsibility within the node model, including strategic oversight, operational management, implementation support and advisory input.
Grant Agreement	The formal funding agreement that defines the objectives, structure, tasks, deliverables, timing and obligations of the FashionKIC project.
Host organisation	The institution within which the node is anchored and which provides its primary organisational base.
Implementation	The practical execution of the framework through activities, coordination routines, stakeholder engagement, follow-up and contribution to project objectives.
Implementation support	The node function through which local teams host, coordinate or enable project-relevant actions such as workshops, consultations, testing, outreach and dissemination.
Institutional anchoring	The degree to which a node is embedded in a credible host structure, partner ecosystem or wider regional context, giving it legitimacy, continuity and operational stability.
Knowledge exchange	The structured sharing of experience, practices, tools, lessons and insights across nodes or work packages in order to improve implementation and generate network-level learning.
Learning	The extraction of usable insight from implementation experience, stakeholder interaction, activities and review processes, with the purpose of improving future action.
Local activation	The set of locally grounded actions through which a node engages stakeholders, builds participation, delivers relevant activities and strengthens FashionKIC's presence in the regional ecosystem. Local activation may include consultations, workshops, testing, outreach, pilot support, visibility actions and follow-up.
Local Advisory Group	A non-executive group of diverse regional stakeholders that provides feedback, relevance testing, legitimacy and strategic insight to the node.

Local adaptation	The justified adjustment of formats, priorities, partnerships or working methods to regional conditions, provided that the common framework and minimum standards remain respected.
Management Team / Node Management Team	The operational core of the node, responsible for planning, coordination, stakeholder follow-up, activity delivery, documentation and liaison with WP2 and other relevant work packages.
Materiality	A prioritisation approach used to identify which sustainability issues are most significant in a given context, based on ecosystem structure, stakeholder concern, transition need and strategic relevance.
Methodological coherence	Consistency in the way tools, concepts and processes are used across nodes so that results remain understandable, comparable and reliable at network level.
Minimum operational requirements	The baseline conditions that each node should meet in order to operate credibly and consistently within the FashionKIC network.
Minimum standards	The non-negotiable practical conditions or expectations that define the minimum acceptable operating level for all nodes.
Monitoring	The regular tracking of activities, engagement, outputs, follow-up actions, risks and lessons learned in order to support review and continuous improvement.
Network coherence	The degree to which nodes operate as parts of one shared European initiative rather than as disconnected local actions.
Node Governing Body	The strategic oversight function within the node, responsible for validating priorities, reviewing major partnerships and considering significant changes or compliance-related issues.
Node lead	The named person responsible for the coordination of the node, including planning, follow-up, liaison and day-to-day implementation oversight.
Node lifecycle	The staged development of a node over time, typically including set-up, mapping and listening, activation, operation and consolidation.

Node Management Team	The group responsible for the operational management of the node, normally including the node lead and any staff or collaborators supporting implementation.
Node operator	The entity or team responsible for running the node in practice. In this framework, the term should be used only where a broader expression is needed beyond the distinction between host organisation, node lead and node management team.
Operational decision	A decision relating to day-to-day planning, delivery, stakeholder outreach, formats, timing or implementation methods, usually taken by the Node Management Team.
Operational model	The practical logic through which a node functions in day-to-day implementation, including routines, interfaces, planning and delivery processes.
Participation pathway	A clearly defined route through which a stakeholder can engage with the node or project in a meaningful role over time.
Performance assessment	The review of whether a node or activity is functioning as expected in relation to agreed objectives, minimum standards, quality and contribution to project outputs.
Pilot	A test activity, experiment or limited implementation used to explore, validate or refine a concept, method or format before broader adoption.
Practical usability	The principle that governance arrangements, tools and procedures should help implementation rather than create unnecessary administrative burden.
Project architecture	The overall structure of FashionKIC across work packages, roles, deliverables and interdependencies.
Quality assurance	The set of review, validation and feedback practices used to ensure that activities, outputs and processes meet agreed standards and are fit for purpose.
Regional relevance	The degree to which node priorities, formats and stakeholder engagement respond to the actual conditions, needs and opportunities of the local ecosystem.
Reporting	The structured communication of progress, activities, outputs, issues and learning for internal review, coordination and accountability purposes.

Resource allocation	The use of available time, budget, effort and organisational capacity in line with agreed work plans and project objectives.
RIS3 alignment	Connection with regional smart specialisation priorities and strategies, especially where innovation, sustainability and regional development agendas overlap.
Segmentation	The grouping of stakeholders according to characteristics such as role, relevance, engagement potential, value-chain position or institutional type in order to guide prioritised engagement.
Smart specialisation	A regional innovation policy approach focused on identifying and supporting strategic areas of strength and transformation. In this framework it is relevant mainly through RIS3 alignment and long-term anchoring.
Stakeholder	Any actor with relevance to the regional ecosystem or to the implementation of FashionKIC, including businesses, designers, manufacturers, educators, researchers, policy actors, intermediaries and others.
Stakeholder engagement	The planned process of identifying, prioritising, contacting, involving and following up stakeholders in ways that support project objectives and ecosystem participation.
Stakeholder map	A structured overview of relevant ecosystem actors, often including information on category, role, relevance, value-chain position and engagement status.
Strategic decision	A decision affecting node positioning, priorities, major partnerships, significant commitments or major shifts in direction.
Strategic oversight	The governance function responsible for validating priorities, confirming direction and reviewing major issues that go beyond routine implementation.
Subsidiarity	The principle that decisions should be taken at the lowest effective level, with escalation only when wider implications require it.
Sustainability filter	A light-touch operational check used before major activities or decisions to consider relevant sustainability dimensions, value-chain implications and regional materiality.

Sustainability integration	The embedding of sustainability considerations into governance, mapping, stakeholder engagement, activity design and long-term node relevance, rather than treating sustainability as a stand-alone theme.
Supporting evidence layer	The background layer of public data and contextual information used to validate and interpret the Ecosystem Mapping Canvas.
Testing	The practical trial of concepts, tools, formats or features with relevant users or stakeholders in order to gather feedback and improve implementation.
Thematic working group / Working group	A temporary or purpose-specific group created to support a defined topic, activity strand or specialised implementation need.
Top-down alignment	The guidance and structure coming from the Grant Agreement, project logic, timelines and work package interdependencies.
Transnational network	A structured collaboration that operates across multiple countries while pursuing shared objectives and a common operating logic.
Validation	The process of reviewing and confirming that a decision, output, method or priority is acceptable, relevant or aligned with the framework.
Value-chain approach	An approach that considers where actors, opportunities and challenges sit across the fashion and textile system, from upstream production to downstream use, reuse and end-of-life.
Work package (WP)	A structured component of the project grouping related tasks, responsibilities and deliverables under a common thematic area.
WP2 coordination	The function responsible for maintaining coherence, alignment and methodological consistency across the FashionKIC nodes network. In D2.1, this role is associated with MODALISBOA as WP2 lead.

Table 2. FashionKIC Work Packages

Work Package	Short description
WP1 – AI-Powered Platform and Data Intelligence	WP1 covers the digital platform dimension of FashionKIC. From the perspective of D2.1, nodes support WP1 by providing ecosystem intelligence, user perspectives and testing opportunities relevant to platform design and deployment.
WP2 – FashionKIC Innovation Nodes Network	WP2 establishes the human and organisational infrastructure of the initiative through a transnational network of physical innovation nodes. It covers the node framework, ecosystem mapping, knowledge exchange, local activation and later strategic development and sustainability planning.
WP3 – Next-Generation Knowledge and Capacity Building	WP3 addresses learning and capacity development. Nodes support WP3 by helping identify local needs, relevant participants and possible pilot environments for training and learning activities.
WP4 – FashionKIC Acceleration Programme	WP4 focuses on the project's acceleration pathway. Nodes connect to WP4 by identifying entrepreneurs, innovators and ecosystem actors relevant to acceleration-related activity.
WP5 – European Expansion and Policy Integration	WP5 covers later-stage work related to RIS3 alignment, policy dialogue, expansion, long-term governance and sustainability. In the logic of D2.1, WP2 generates operational experience, stakeholder relationships and ecosystem intelligence that later feed into WP5.
WP6 – Strategic Communication and Ecosystem Building	WP6 supports communication, visibility and broader ecosystem-building actions. Nodes contribute stories, cases, engagement opportunities and local visibility, while also benefiting from communication support that strengthens participation and legitimacy.
WP7 – Project Coordination and Integration	WP7 provides the project-level governance architecture, including coordination, monitoring, quality assurance, risk management and escalation. D2.1 is designed to work in alignment with WP7 rather than replace it.

Table 3. WP2 Deliverables

Deliverable	Short description
D2.1 – FashionKIC Node Operational Framework	The common operational framework for establishing and running the FashionKIC Innovation Nodes. It defines the node model, governance, decision-making logic, operational routines, sustainability integration, monitoring approach and minimum standards for implementation.
D2.2 – Regional Ecosystem Mapping Reports	The WP2 deliverable focused on ecosystem mapping. In D2.1, D2.2 is presented as a core operational tool for stakeholder prioritisation, thematic focus, activity planning, cross-node comparison and later strategic development. It includes the Ecosystem Mapping Canvas, the supporting evidence layer and a short interpretive layer to support contextual understanding, comparability and node decision-making.
D2.3 – Cross-Node Knowledge Exchange Methodology	The deliverable that develops the methodology for structured knowledge exchange between nodes. D2.1 already establishes this as a core expectation, while D2.3 is expected to define the more detailed mechanisms, formats and routines for comparative reflection, transfer and peer learning.
D2.4 – Local Node Activation Reports	The deliverable linked to local activation within WP2. In D2.1, node activities are framed as locally grounded actions that can support engagement, testing, learning, visibility and cross-WP linkage, with D2.4 capturing the activation dimension more directly.
D2.5 – FashionKIC Node Strategic Development and Sustainability Plans	The later WP2 deliverable focused on longer-term development, continuity and sustainability planning for the nodes. D2.1 positions D2.5 as the stage where intelligence generated through mapping, activation and operational experience can inform longer-term strategic thinking.

Annex V. Minimum KPI Set

The table below sets out a minimum KPI and monitoring framework for the FashionKIC nodes. It combines grant-linked expectations with operational monitoring points intended to support implementation, review and cross-node comparability. The purpose is not to create a heavy reporting system, but to provide a common basis for tracking node establishment, activity, contribution and continuity.

This KPI set should be used as a light operational reference and may be complemented by additional node-specific indicators where relevant. Where possible, tracking should remain aligned with the wider project monitoring and review logic.

Dimension	KPI / monitoring point	Minimum expectation / reference	Use
Node establishment and governance	Node lead designated	1 named lead per node	Confirms operational responsibility
Node establishment and governance	Governance structure in place	Basic governance logic defined	Confirms node is operationally structured
Node establishment and governance	Local Advisory Group established	5 representatives from different stakeholder categories	Confirms advisory mechanism is in place
Node establishment and governance	Participation in coordination processes	Participation in agreed node / project coordination moments	Confirms connection to wider network
Stakeholder engagement	Key stakeholders identified through mapping	Minimum 30 key stakeholders per region	Baseline operational requirement
Stakeholder engagement	Diversity of stakeholder categories represented	Coverage of relevant ecosystem actor groups	Checks ecosystem breadth and balance
Stakeholder engagement	Stakeholders actively engaged	Node-specific tracking	Measures practical engagement beyond mapping

Stakeholder engagement	Follow-up actions completed	Node-specific tracking	Measures continuity and usefulness of engagement
Stakeholder engagement	Advisory input activated	At relevant implementation moments	Ensures advisory engagement is meaningful
Activity delivery	Number of node activities delivered	Node-specific tracking	Measures level of activation
Activity delivery	Type of activities delivered	Node-specific tracking	Helps assess diversity of formats and functions
Activity delivery	Participants engaged per activity	Node-specific tracking	Measures reach
Activity delivery	Usable outputs generated	Evidence per activity	Checks whether activities produce concrete value
Activity delivery	Node events delivered against the project target	Contribution to the project target of 8 regional events across the network (minimum 2 per node), with at least 20 stakeholders engaged in each event	Supports project-level tracking
Activity delivery	Significant node activities delivered	Node-specific tracking	Measures implementation rhythm beyond the minimum event target
Cross-project contribution	Instances where node activity contributed to other parts of the project, such as platform development, training and capacity-building, acceleration support, communication, policy dialogue or ecosystem-building	Node-specific tracking	Measures transversal role of the node
Cross-project	Ecosystem	Node-specific	Measures

contribution	intelligence generated for wider project use	tracking	usefulness of node knowledge
Cross-project contribution	Stakeholder connections generated for wider project use	Node-specific tracking	Measures contribution beyond local activity
Cross-project contribution	Participation in cross-node exchange	Participation in shared learning and coordination moments	Confirms network contribution
Continuity and anchoring	Strategic local partnerships engaged	Node-specific tracking	Measures institutional anchoring
Continuity and anchoring	Contribution to continuity planning	Node-specific tracking	Measures forward-looking development
Continuity and anchoring	Evidence of longer-term positioning	Node-specific tracking	Assesses continuity potential

Annex VI. Key Implementation Risks and Mitigation Strategies

The table below identifies a core set of implementation risks that may affect node relevance, delivery quality, coordination or continuity. It is intended as a light operational reference to support early identification of issues and proportionate mitigation during implementation.

This risk table is intended to support practical reflection rather than formal compliance alone. It should be reviewed periodically and used to inform planning, follow-up and coordination decisions during implementation.

For practical prioritisation, the risk table includes a simple assessment of likelihood and impact. “High likelihood / Medium impact” is used where a risk is relatively common in collaborative projects but is not, on its own, likely to compromise implementation in a critical way. “Medium likelihood / High impact” is used where a risk may not occur in all cases, but would significantly affect coherence, quality or continuity if it does arise. “High / High” is reserved for risks that are both structurally likely to be neglected and capable of generating serious consequences for implementation or longer-term node viability.

Risk area	Description	Likelihood	Impact	Likely effect	Suggested mitigation
Weak institutional anchoring	The node is not clearly positioned within its host organisation or regional ecosystem	Medium	High	Low legitimacy, weak continuity, unclear ownership	Clarify host role, node lead, governance logic and strategic positioning early
Unclear priorities	The node tries to do too many things without a clear strategic focus	Medium	High	Fragmentation, weak impact, diffuse activity design	Use periodic strategic and action planning to define priorities, target groups and intended outputs
Broad but	Many	High	Medium	Low	Define

shallow engagement	stakeholders are contacted but little meaningful follow-up occurs			usefulness of engagement, weak relationships, low conversion into action	participation pathways, prioritise key actors and maintain follow-up discipline
Over-concentration in one actor group	Engagement is captured by a narrow part of the ecosystem	Medium	Medium	Limited diversity, weak ecosystem relevance, biased perspective	Review stakeholder balance regularly and ensure broader value-chain and institutional coverage
Weak advisory use	Advisory structures exist formally but are not used meaningfully	Medium	Medium	Low added value, stakeholder fatigue, performative consultation	Activate advisory input only at moments where there is something concrete to review or inform
Activities disconnected from strategy	Activities are planned as isolated actions rather than as part of a wider node direction	Medium	High	Weak coherence, unclear outputs, reduced long-term value	Link activities to node priorities, intended outputs and wider project contribution
Poor cross-node visibility	Nodes do not sufficiently share plans, timing or target groups	Medium	Medium	Missed complementarities, duplication, weak network logic	Use regular cross-node coordination, shared planning tools and communication templates
Ambiguity in decision-making	It is unclear which issues should be resolved locally and	Medium	High	Delays, duplication, inconsistent implementation	Apply the agreed governance and escalation logic and

	which should be escalated				document framework-relevant decisions
Weak documentation and monitoring	Activities happen but evidence, follow-up and learning are not captured consistently	Medium	High	Reduced accountability, weak learning, poor comparability	Use simple monitoring, QA and learning templates within the toolkit
Sustainability treated superficially	Sustainability remains too abstract or generic in node practice	Medium	Medium	Weak relevance, poor alignment with project ambition	Apply ESG, value-chain and materiality prompts when setting priorities and planning activities
Limited continuity planning	The node focuses only on short-term delivery	High	High	Weak post-project relevance and missed strategic partnerships	Use activities to build legitimacy, identify continuity partners and clarify longer-term positioning

Annex VII. Reference Documents

The following documents provide the main reference base for the development and use of this framework.

Project and contractual framework

- FashionKIC Grant Agreement (GAP-101256183).
- FashionKIC Description of Action (Part B).
- Objectives, tasks and timing defined under WP2 – FashionKIC Innovation Nodes Network.
- Relevant project-wide monitoring, quality assurance and coordination arrangements.

European policy and strategic framework

- European Commission. The European Green Deal
- European Commission. EU Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles
- European Commission. Transition Pathway for the Textiles Ecosystem
- United Nations. Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development