PRESS RELEASE

From Lab to Market: ENLIGHTEN's End User Advisory Board

Through its End User Advisory Board (EAB), ENLIGHTEN Completes Structured End User Engagement Process, Bridging Space Innovation with Broader Industry Needs.

WESSLING, Germany, 20 March 2026 – The Horizon Europe project ENLIGHTEN (European iNitiative for Low-cost, Innovative & Green High-Thrust Engine) has concluded a **three-part** End User Advisory Board (EAB) engagement cycle, co-designed and facilitated by **Intza Balenciaga, Senior Project Manager at AZO Anwendungszentrum GmbH Oberpfaffenhofen** (AZO), in close collaboration with the project consortium. This structured dialogue process — led by AZO, a specialist in innovation and competitiveness consulting — brought together key industry stakeholders from across the space transportation sector (and beyond), creating a bridge between cutting-edge propulsion technology development and real-world industry needs.

What is ENLIGHTEN — and why does it matter beyond space?

ENLIGHTEN is a collaborative European research initiative developing the next generation of propulsion technologies for launch systems: cleaner, more cost-efficient, and built for industrial scale. While its immediate application is space transportation, the technologies under development — including **additive manufacturing, artificial intelligence-driven processes, and advanced engine testing methodologies** — carry significant relevance for industries ranging from aerospace and defence to advanced manufacturing and energy.

A Process Built for Impact

Recognising that breakthrough technologies only create value when they reach the right markets, AZO designed and led a three-stage engagement process to ensure ENLIGHTEN's developments are grounded in the needs and expectations of future users and decision-makers.

The EAB brings together a deliberately diverse mix of voices: satellite manufacturers, industrial suppliers, policymakers at EU and international levels, space agencies, research organisations, SMEs, start-ups, and non-space technology users. This breadth ensures that the project's outputs are assessed not only for their technical merit, but for their market readiness, cross-sector transferability, and long-term commercial viability.

Three Meetings, One Clear Direction

Meeting 1 — Setting the Stage (23 September 2025)**.** The first session introduced ENLIGHTEN's vision and technological ambitions to EAB members, opening a conversation about what the future of space transportation should look like — and who it should serve. Initial insights on stakeholder needs and market expectations were gathered, forming the foundation for the sessions to follow.

Meeting 2 — Digging into the Challenges & Opportunities (2 February 2026). The second session moved into deeper territory: what stands in the way of these technologies reaching the market? Discussions explored barriers to industrial adoption alongside more detailed presentations on engine development, additive manufacturing, AI integration, and testing. The goal was not just to identify problems, but to surface realistic pathways to solutions.

Meeting 3 — Shaping the Path Forward (11 March 2026). The final session brought the process full circle, consolidating feedback, refining exploitation pathways, and defining concrete approaches for future market uptake with clear messages for EU policy makers. Cross-sector opportunities were explored, and the conversation reinforced a critical theme: closing the gap between prototype and industrial deployment requires early, structured engagement with end users — what this process was designed to deliver.

What This Process Achieved

Under AZO's leadership, the EAB process delivered more than a series of meetings. It produced a structured body of external insights that is now actively shaping

ENLIGHTEN's exploitation strategy, technology maturation roadmap, and communication approach towards end users and industry.

Critically, it demonstrated that space innovation does not happen in isolation. The cross-sector perspective brought into the room by AZO's facilitation has opened doors to applications and partnerships that extend well beyond the launch pad.

Looking Ahead

ENLIGHTEN continues to advance its mission of making European launch technology more competitive, sustainable, and market ready. The EAB process has laid a foundation of trust, transparency, and strategic alignment that will inform the project's next phases in Enlighten ED — and serve as a model for how deep-tech research projects can meaningfully connect with the industries and end users they ultimately serve.

Through these exchanges, the EAB meetings helped strengthen the project's strategic direction by providing external perspectives on technology development, industrial relevance and future market opportunities. The discussions also contributed to shaping ENLIGHTEN's approach to **technology maturation pathways, exploitation strategy and communication towards end users.**

The EAB process has also supported the **identification of opportunities for cross-sector applications** and reinforced the need to bridge the gap between prototype development and industrial deployment.

By fostering this ongoing dialogue with end users and industry representatives, ENLIGHTEN continues to reinforce its contribution to Europe's innovation ecosystem and to the long-term development of c**ompetitive, resilient and sustainable space transportation technologies.**

For more information, kindly visit ENLIGHTEN and AZO.

About ENLIGHTEN

ENLIGHTEN (**E**uropean i**N**itiative for **L**ow cost, **I**nnovative & **G**reen **H**igh **T**hrust **EN**gine) is an EC-funded project focused on one big objective: developing new technologies to reduce costs of access to space, while increasing competitiveness of current and future Space Transportation Systems (STS) in Europe. It is led by ArianeGroup SA, supported by a team of 18 entities across Europe, each covering a specific topic or task. project-enlighten.eu

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