

ALIGNING INNOVATION, REGULATION COMPLIANCE AND MARKET UPTAKE
FIVE EU PROJECTS PRESENTING RESULTS FOR IMPACT AT SICT2026, PRAGUE

EU-funded projects RELIANCE, NOVA, NANOBLOC, SUPREME and MIRIA joined forces at SICT2026 in Prague to explore one of the biggest challenges facing antimicrobial nanocoatings today: transitioning from scientific breakthroughs to real-world market uptake. The collaborative workshop brought together researchers, industry representatives and regulatory experts to discuss the need for stronger alignment between innovation, policy, standardisation and industrial realities. Through interactive sessions and strategic roundtable, participants identified key bottlenecks, future research priorities and the regulatory gaps that still hinder deployment of safe and sustainable antimicrobial nanocoatings across Europe.

As part of the Surfaces, Interfaces and Coatings Technologies International Conference 2026 in Prague, [RELIANCE project](#) joined fellow Horizon Europe projects NOVA, NANOBLOC, SUPREME and MIRIA in a collaborative workshop “**Antimicrobial Nanocoatings: Aligning Innovation, Regulatory Compliance and Market Uptake**” held on 7 May.

Bringing together researchers, industry representatives, innovation actors and regulatory experts, the workshop reflected a growing recognition across Europe’s advanced materials ecosystem: scientific innovation alone is no longer enough to ensure impact.

Over the past few years, EU-funded projects working on novel antimicrobial nanocoatings have generated major advances in areas such as bio-based antimicrobial compounds, smart-response nanoparticles, modelling of microorganism-material interactions, durability validation and scalable coating technologies. Despite the strong scientific progress, the path from laboratory success to market adoption remains fragmented and uncertain.

What was clearly stated with the start, is that the challenge is no longer proving that these innovative materials work; it is ensuring alignment between science, regulation and market realities.

Designed as a collaborative effort to connect the full innovation chain, the event recognized how projects that initially evolved in parallel have increasingly moved towards active cooperation, knowledge exchange and shared strategic reflection.

A central focus throughout the discussions was the urgent need to bridge persistent gaps between innovation and implementation. Participants explored challenges linked to predictive material design, real-use durability and safety assessment, harmonised testing methodologies, regulatory complexity, industrial scalability and standardisation requirements.



The final roundtable session, “*The Future: Aligning Research, Regulation & Sustainability,*” asked participants to reflect around three strategic themes:

- Predictive and digital material design,
- Safe and Sustainable by Design (SSbD) and environmental impact,
- Industrial deployment and standardisation pathways.

The attendees identified common bottlenecks and discussed priority actions for the 2026–2030 period, such as stronger alignment between research and regulatory frameworks, greater investment in demonstration and validation activities as well as improved coordination around European standardisation efforts.

“Europe now possesses a critical mass of scientific knowledge and technological capability in antimicrobial nanocoatings — but achieving societal and economic impact will require coordinated action across disciplines and sectors.”

Dr. Jan Van Impe, Full Professor and Division Head KU Leuven/BioTeC+

The workshop reinforced the value of collaboration among EU-funded initiatives. By pooling experiences, comparing challenges and jointly discussing future priorities, the participating projects demonstrated how synergies can strengthen both the visibility and long-term relevance of research outcomes.

Being the final dissemination event for RELIANCE, the event marked an important milestone in its mission to support healthier environments through sustainable, bio-based and high-performance antimicrobial nanocoatings.

The takeaway message was clear: Europe does not lack innovation capacity. What is needed now is alignment - between scientific excellence, regulatory readiness, industrial feasibility and societal acceptance.

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Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Health and Digital Executive Agency (HADEA). Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

