



Tapojärvi partners with EIT RawMaterials for “zero-waste” Student Open Innovation Challenge

- Tapojärvi Open Innovation Challenge 2025 invites students across Europe to create sustainable solutions for the mining, steel, and forestry sectors.
- Tapojärvi, a Finnish company, has provided sustainable mining and industrial services for nearly 70 years.
- Initiative supports Europe’s circular economy goals, fostering collaboration between academia and industry to tackle urgent environmental challenges.
- EIT RawMaterials is supported by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), a body of the European Union.

Berlin, 17.12.2024 EIT RawMaterials and Tapojärvi are joining forces to boost innovation and employment in Europe’s raw materials sector with the Open Innovation Challenge 2025. The initiative invites students from across Europe to develop zero-waste solutions for the mining, steel, and forestry industries, with the potential to secure internships or permanent positions within the Tapojärvi Group.

“These partnerships are the backbone of Europe’s future competitiveness”, said Bernd Schäfer, CEO, Managing Director, EIT RawMaterials. “EIT RawMaterials provides the knowledge and network, while Tapojärvi offers the expertise and a real-world environment for innovators to thrive. Together, we’re creating opportunities that drive forward sustainable solutions and strengthen Europe’s leadership in the circular economy.”

Students from all over Europe will be able to participate in the challenge of developing innovative and scalable solutions for reusing waste materials from the mining, steel, and forest industries, such as turning slag and dust from steel production into construction materials.



Tapojärvi, a Finnish family-owned business, is renowned for its sustainable mining and mill services that reduce environmental impact and conserve natural resources. With a vision to become the leading industrial circular economy company by 2035, Tapojärvi processes industrial by-products and pioneers' new solutions for the mining industry.

“For us, the Open Innovation Challenge is a strategic initiative to tap into global talent, particularly from European universities renowned for sparking innovation and technological breakthroughs.” Seppo Ahola, Chief Innovation Officer, Tapojärvi. “Our previous challenge in partnership with EIT Raw Materials in 2023 set a new benchmark, with remarkable creativity and enthusiasm from students, and we are excited to see the fresh ideas and new participants the next challenge will bring”.

By partnering students with leaders in the raw materials industry like Tapojärvi, EIT RawMaterials' Open Innovation Challenges address real-world industrial and environmental challenges and offer students hands-on experience that prepares them for careers in the raw materials sector. Such initiatives play a vital role in addressing the skills gap in the raw materials sector, which will need 1.2 million skilled professionals by 2030.

The Open Innovation Challenge 2025 offers students in Environmental Engineering, Chemical Engineering, Metallurgy, and related fields a chance to apply their knowledge to real industry challenges. Top-performing teams will receive expert coaching, compete for a €10,000 prize, and gain opportunities for internships or permanent roles within the Tapojärvi Group. Last year's winners, ReAct, a team from the Technical University of Madrid, developed a groundbreaking concept to transform fly ash, a forest industry by-product, and wood into activated carbon for air and water purification.

By bridging the gap between education and industry, EIT RawMaterials and Tapojärvi are helping to foster a generation of skilled professionals ready to drive Europe's transition to a circular economy. This partnership exemplifies how public-private initiatives can address sustainability goals, create economic value, and strengthen Europe's industrial resilience.



In addition to hosting Open Innovation Challenges for the industry, EIT RawMaterials focuses on closing the skills gap in the raw materials sector through initiatives like *Girls Go Circular*, which has equipped over 59,000 European schoolgirls aged 14-19 with digital and entrepreneurial skills in the circular economy. Another key effort is the *Higher Education Initiative*, which engages more than 350 universities in creating action plans to enhance entrepreneurial and innovation capacity at all levels. Additionally, it has supported over 1,200 startups, fostering innovation and growth in the sector.

Note to editor:

Tapojärvi Open Innovation Challenge 2025 [here](#)

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About EIT RawMaterials

EIT RawMaterials is the largest and most active raw materials knowledge and innovation network globally, comprising over 300 partner organisations across the entire raw materials value chain. EIT RawMaterials demonstrates its dedication to advancing and supporting a circular economy in Europe by fostering innovation, collaboration, and sustainable practices. Mandated by the European Commission, EIT RawMaterials leads the European Raw Materials Alliance (ERMA), which includes more than 750 members and an advanced project pipeline of over 40 projects, representing an investment potential of more than €25 billion.

Supported by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), a body of the European Union, EIT RawMaterials was established in 2015 to advance Europe's transition to a sustainable economy. Its mission is to secure a sustainable supply of raw materials for Europe, close material loops, and design innovative product solutions, with the goal to position raw materials as a strategic strength for Europe through innovation, education, and entrepreneurship.

Since its founding, EIT RawMaterials has deployed over €600 million in direct strategic funding to support more than 800 projects and start-ups. These initiatives, including ERMA projects, have leveraged additional funding of €5 billion from external sources, creating a cumulative impact of more than €5.5 billion in critical and strategic raw materials projects, technologies, and programmes across Europe and beyond. Learn more at www.eitrawmaterials.eu.

About Tapojärvi

Tapojärvi is a Finnish family-owned company that has been providing environmentally sustainable products and services for nearly 70 years. Tapojärvi operates in multiple countries and is particularly known for its innovative solutions that combine operational and economic efficiency with environmental sustainability. At the core of its operations are mining and industrial services, as well as sustainable development-focused solutions that support customer needs while promoting environmental and economic resilience.

Find out more at www.tapojarvi.com.