

Dear Readers,

Our project InnoWeit could successfully be closed at the End of September. With this Newsletter we would like to give a conclusion about the results we achieved together and inform you about our next plans.

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### **The project InnoWeit (<http://www.innoweit.de/>)**

Who wants to be successful these days has to be inventive – and that can be learned. With this assumption the project partners together with the team of the Institute for Applied Work Science worked on an analysis of the innovative ability and the development of a qualification program "InnoWeit – from the idea to lifelong learning". Based on the results of the tests of the InnoKenn-Tool, the customized qualification program should be developed and transferred to the EU-partner countries. Organizations in Bulgaria, Greece, Lithuania, Hungary and Spain are being enabled to identify their strengths and weaknesses and qualify key persons to promote Innovation and Improvement processes in the company.

Starting with the Kick-off meeting in December 2013 the project followed its course towards the shared aim of improving the innovative ability of companies in Europe. After qualifying the project team in all terms related to the InnoKenn Method word about the project was spread in the information workshops which took place in the partner countries in spring and summer 2014. Organized by the project partners these workshops were used to qualify interested key persons from regional companies in the usage of the InnoKenn Method and to acquire pilot organizations for the first tests of the method. The following test phase took place in 25 pilot organizations and was supervised by the project partners.

In fall 2014 the expert workshops began. Together with various experts from both academia and practice we discussed the question how the innovation and quality management can be used to close the gap between lifelong learning and the needs of the companies. Further topics were the chances and boundaries that occurred during the tests of the InnoKenn method and the requirements and expectations towards the self-learning material for the qualification of the innovation promoters in the partner countries.

The project was officially closed with the final conference in June 2015 at Ruhr University Bochum, where national experts, company representatives and the European project partners discussed the project results and factors of success or failure in the complex field of innovation and qualification and their implication for lifelong learning.



Image 1: Final conference on Innovation, Quality Management and Employability, at the RUB Bochum, June 2015

### Outlook

- “Innovation, Quality Management and Competence Development” (Ed. Martin Kröll) is the title of the book, in which project results and other findings in this field will be published in 2016 by Springer under „Contributions to Management Science“, ISBN-number: 978-3-319-25872-0. With this we would also like to invite you to participate in this book, if you are interested, please note the Call for paper below!
- In September our new project “Job Developer – EU project against youth unemployment” started. The project aims at fighting youth unemployment by empowering them to use their talents for finding and keeping new jobs. For further information see <http://aktuell.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/pm2015/pm00120.html.en>.

We would like to use the opportunity to give a big thank you to all companies and partners for their work and engagement without which the project InnoWeit could never have been successful.

Best regards,

Your InnoWeit team from Ruhr University Bochum

### Call for papers

#### **Innovation and quality management in Europe as a challenge for competence development (working title)**

#### **How can concepts from the innovation and quality management research help overcome the gap between labor market demand and results from vocational education efforts?**

Keywords: Innovation and quality management, vocational competence development, gap between labor market demand and potential, misguided developments on the labor market, lifelong learning

Not least because of the background of technical development and the globalization of markets, customer requirements change rapidly. To be able to react to these changed requirements and to maintain the competitiveness, it is necessary to create innovative products, services and processes. But in doing so, there is –during the innovation process – a high risk that the quality of the value creation processes and their results suffer. Thus, the following question must be asked to create the innovation process and its quality during implementation: Which requirements can be derived from an innovation and quality management, which tries to satisfy the future development concerning the competences of organizations and their members? Furthermore it is important to consider, how competence development measures can be designed in order to anticipate the initiated change and to fulfill the innovational and quality management requirements. In this context there is a need of respective concepts and instruments. At that point it must also be considered, to which extent innovation processes are a special challenge for small and medium-sized enterprises, which make up a big part of economy.

Seen as a whole there are many highly qualified young and adult manpower on the European labor market (who should basically be able to react to diverse developments due to their qualification) – as this is a result of various studies (Brenke, 2012). In the entire European Union the number of unemployed youth is more than double as high compared to adults. The total unemployment in Europe has increased from 9,6% in 2011 to 10,7% in 2013 (Eurostat, 2014). Among these unemployed, there are also highly qualified persons. In this context it should be clarified, to which extent those seeking employment, but also those being employed possess the needed competences regarding the requirements derived from innovation and quality management.

To stay employed durably or to be able to orientate newly, competences once acquired must be updated permanently and the status of competences must be adapted continuously (Rump & Eilers, 2006). Taken together these facts seem to make necessary a continuous competence development of manpower in form of lifelong learning. This competence development could be based even more on the current and expected requirements of the labor market, but without disregarding individual preferences and setting of priorities. A dialogue between the affected and the responsible actors is necessary and must be organized to be able to implement this demand-oriented strategy.

Apart from that it should be uncovered how misguided developments, which lead to gaps between the labor market needs and the competences of employees, can be identified and prevented early. Therefore, it must be clarified, how existing systems can be examined in order to find discrepancies and to synchronize them with the requirements of the labor market. This is of special importance, because in this context it is also a matter of question how vocational competence development can be controlled currently and in future, as well as if (and how) the acquirement of competences can become a result of the connection between career interest and personal interest. A stronger fit between the required and the

offered competencies on the labor market evidently leads to increased employment, this way relieving the social security systems (see Kröll, 2015).

To face the challenges mentioned above, the book project aims at discussing how the gap between the competencies and qualifications required by the labor market and the offered ones can be reduced. On the one hand, it is a matter of question, which role other actors, apart from the working population and the enterprises, can have in overcoming the demonstrated gap (keywords: cluster policy and promotion of economy). In this context it should be discussed which **actors** are challenged in this context and which **expectations** may or should be related to those **actors** in order to overcome or prevent this gap. On the other hand, it should be discussed critically, which **instruments** from innovation and quality management research may contribute to the reduction of this discrepancy.

In the light of these issues, it should also be regarded which problem-solving approaches, e.g. from other European countries exist at the **various levels** (e.g. individual level, enterprise level, regional level, country level) and **which competences are necessary to enable the respective actors to professionally implement these instruments at the different levels.**

It is also interesting, to which extent developments and trends for future requirements can be anticipated and made useful for the competence development with the help of innovation and quality management. From a macro-perspective it should also be considered, which aberrations exist between the requirements of the labor market and the programs of education providers, with the help of which key figures they can be identified and how they can be counteracted.

### Contact:

We invite **empirical and theoretical contributions** on these topics and the submission of **paper proposals** (ca. 1500 characters) for the scheduled **book release until September 30th, 2015.**

Please send your contributions via e-mail to: **Dr. Martin Kröll** [martin.kroell@rub.de](mailto:martin.kroell@rub.de), Department HR Development and Qualification, IAW, Ruhr-University Bochum, [www.iaw.rub.de/puq](http://www.iaw.rub.de/puq)

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