



RESEARCH DRIVEN CLUSTERS

SEEDING INNOVATION: TRAINING FOR RESEARCH- DRIVEN CLUSTERS (INNOSEE)

Progress Report

Public Part

Project information

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Executive Summary

Modernising Europe's skills base is one of the main aims of the flagship initiative "An Agenda for New Skills and Jobs." Improving access to lifelong learning, to help people move to high-value added sectors and 'white jobs' is a major component of the EU flexicurity. Acquiring the right skills is necessary for the establishment and development of the research-driven clusters (RDC) as a driver of the modern EU industrial innovation. Therefore the guidelines for the development and management of cluster initiatives in different EU member states consider vocational training as one of the major tasks for cluster development. Training policies to upgrade skills and competencies especially of SMEs (e.g. strategic management capabilities) proved to be an important area of RDC operation.

RDC improve the competitiveness and innovation by bringing together resources and expertise of the triple helix of the universities, industries and public sector. Research-driven clusters contribute to the "smart specialisation" of regions and countries. An increasing number of studies show the relationship between their presence and strong economic performance, growth and prosperity. In the world of collaborative and open innovation strategies the relevance of research-based clusters as local nodes in the global innovation networks increases. RDC differ from standard clusters by the stronger science/research base and by the ability to generate with greater frequency innovative enterprises that are able to commercialise and exploit research. RDC are often developed on a shared vision and consensus building among key stakeholders and therefore the quality and intensity of the collaboration among its members is a critical issue. Investments and highly trained people are needed as a key to their success as well as defining vision and strategy, building social capital and focus on activating clusters.

The project assumes that the training needs in RDC will vary from the traditional clusters due to the key role of higher education institutions and research centres, their sector focus, typology, aims, openness, and geographical coverage. The identification of RDC management needs and the development of tailor-made training is a new field in cluster management training building upon the existing national and EU training practice enriched with better understanding of the right type of human capital skills. Based on the needs analysis and training needs assessment the partners develop training materials integrated in E-learning platform that satisfy them. The translation of the toolkit from English into the 6 national languages of the partners will broaden the opportunities for training the local RDC staff. The InnoSee project will contribute also to key competences development and harmonisation of common educational standards in the field of research-driven clusters.

All products completed at this stage as well as the products that will be developed till the end of the project are and will be available at the project website: www.innosee.eu

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1. Project Objectives

The long-term objective of the InnoSee project is the enhancement of life-long learning, exploitation of the Competence framework and Curriculum on research-driven clusters training, better quality of research-driven clusters proposals submitted to authorities managing the EU funds, improved planning, implementation and coordination of related projects.

The specific objectives achieved at the end of the project are: Created platform for harmonized and improved quality of education of research-driven clusters managers and staff. The trainings provided by different institutions offer uniform set of knowledge and skills.

The concrete aims achieved during the project implementation encompass:

- 1) Identified training needs of the project target group and its analysis and assessment.
- 2) Elaborated and harmonized content of individual modules within the Curriculum for training of research-driven clusters manager in languages of all participating countries.
- 3) Documented teaching and training methodologies in Tool Kit for individual modules using best practise examples of all participating institutions.
- 4) Pool of quality trainers in different topics, specialized on the various content and methodology of training modules.
- 5) Courses are tested and included in portfolio of participating educational institutions in each participating country.
- 6) Created quality brand mark for harmonised training and initiated European Association of Trainers of Research-driven Clusters

The achievement of the project aims and objectives will contribute to the improvement of the entrepreneurial culture of RDC managers and staff in the project participant countries, to the development of RDC knowledge and managerial skills among students that are future RDC cluster employees and will enrich cluster training culture in the EU.

2. Project Approach

Project activities completed at this stage are structured in the following phases:

- Identifying of the RDC training needs on the basis of conducted in each partner country desk research, elaborated methodology for needs assessment, unified questionnaires, carrying out interviews with in total over 620 cluster managers and members from each country on the basis of the questionnaire developed, organizing 2 focus group discussions per country to complement the information from the interviews, preparing of national assessment reports on needs for RDC staff training and a summarized analytical report.
- Development of RDC training content that includes elaboration of Competence Framework for Research-driven Clusters Management, Training Toolkit and Pool of RDC Trainers.
- Development of analytical and technical specifications of the e-Learning platform
- Elaboration of project website with all project products available at the moment for download and for further products dissemination and exploitation.
- On-going monitoring and evaluation of project goals, results and indicators by set of qualitative and quantitative evaluation criteria and tools and preparing of interim monitoring report.
- In terms of ensuring publicity and visibility for all project products available at the current stage and outcomes different dissemination channels have been used (such as international workshops, media publications, local, regional and national networks, website, dissemination events).
- All currently available products are elaborated with effective use of previously developed results and in this way logical continuation, exploitation and sustainability of results is ensured.

3. Project Outcomes & Results

At this stage the following project outcomes and results are completed:

Training needs assessment: State of play of the participating countries and identification of research-driven clusters – elaboration of analysis on the clusters' performance and their potential based on desk research (6 country report and 1 analytical summarized report), Methodology for needs assessment and Analytical report on needs assessment - the most important research-driven managers skills were identified (6 country report and 1 analytical summarized report).

Training content development, elaborated on the basis of the training needs assessment: Competence Framework of research-driven cluster managers, Training Tool Kit structured in 9 learning modules and Pool of RDC Trainers. These products will be finalized after the conducting of the pilot training sessions on the basis of the trainees' feedback.

E-learning platform: analytical and technical specifications of the platform, the development of the platform itself is impending.

1st international workshop in Thessaloniki, Greece with participation of all partners and representatives of the target group for discussing of the identified RDC training needs feasibility and relevancy.

For the purposes of the project a website (www.innosee.eu) has been developed and is currently maintained. The website contains information about the InnoSee project. All products that have public status, according to the project work plan, are also published on the site.



4. Partnerships

Project partnership is composed by institutions and organizations from 6 EU countries – Bulgaria, Spain, Sweden, Italy, Greece and Austria - with different profile, complimentary skills and expertise and specific role within the processes of LL. It consists of 3 universities and 3 NGOs and one private company all of them having extensive experience in projects in the educational area and also having large networks of contacts representing good project sector coverage.

The consortium is led by IPS at UNWE (BG) highly experienced in LLP projects, as well as in educational projects from different other sources. IPS has been involved in SMEs research and their collaboration in various sectors of the Bulgarian economy.

ITPIO (BG) is a partner of one of the leading Bulgarian business clusters – The Bulgarian ICT Cluster. The main activities of the Institute are related to the providing of vocational and adult training and research activities in the field of vocational and adult education.

FUNDITEC (ES) promotes the regional development and the technological innovation in public organizations and private enterprises. The organisation has vast experience in the development of cluster strategies and regional innovation schemes.

STPKC (SE) is engaged in innovative e-learning services, including those that are extensively worksite, learner-centred, problem-based/focused and virtual community-anchored.

ASEV (IT) is experienced in adult and vocational training and career guidance centre. It has built up a wide network of partnerships with training institutions, companies and regional authorities.

INTELSPE INNOVATION TECHNOLOGIES SA (EL) offers engineering, IT, and consulting services in the field of intelligent and smart cities it has been involved in many projects for innovative SMEs needs analysis identification and training toolkits development.

FH JOANNEUM (AT) offers a variety of innovative courses tailored to companies, research organizations and innovation clusters. It has developed different studies and training programmes for improving the skills of managers, employees and entrepreneurs.

All Partners in the Consortium play an important role in the realization of the project. Taking into account the complementarity of organizational profiles, every partner is assigned specific tasks for fulfillment of each of the working packages. The leading partners of the different work packages are determined according to the partner's competences and capacity to carry out the work.

The different profiles of the partners and their complementarities ensure a wide range of views over the project which provides for a more exhaustive coverage of the topic. Moreover, as it is proven by the partners' profiles, there is very good representation of organizations working with the project target groups. The project has formed the partner mix that will guarantee the achievement of the project objectives and a strong exploitation potential of the project results.

The anticipated impact of the project results will be on a European level. The partners have a strong intention to actively promote the projects products and to

ensure its use by a wide range of interested institutions not only in their countries, but in all countries participating in the Lifelong Learning programme. An EU multiplication effect will be also sought through involvement of the InnoSee users.

5. Plans for the Future

According to the project work plan, the following development stages and activities will be carried out by the end of the project:

Finalizing of the already elaborated Competence Framework for RDC Management, Training Toolkit for Research-driven Clusters and Pool of RDC Trainers;

Conducting of the 2nd international workshop with participation of target groups representatives in order to discuss the feasibility of the prepared training materials and methodologies;

Finalizing of the e-Learning platform development and its upload with training content;

Conducting of pilot training sessions through involving of target groups representatives from all partner countries and collecting, analysing and implementing of their feedback;

Conducting of 2 information meetings in all partner countries with participation of at least 600 stakeholders in total;

Conducting of final international conference (100 participants) that will aim presentation of the European policy framework on Research-driven clusters, the projects methodology and products and sharing of end users experience.

After the project is finished, the InnoSee study module will be available for implementation by other interested RDC or training organizations. The project results will be accessible via the website of each partner. The target groups will be reached in the following ways:

1. Managers and staff of research-driven clusters.

The InnoSee platform will enable them to gain harmonized relevant and quality education with an opportunity to choose from various modules according to their needs. This will increase the performance of staff involved in research-driven clusters management and will directly influence the chances of organizations to put their ideas into practice and make a positive change through their clusters.

2. Managers and trainers from educational institutions providing education and training to people involved as managers in research-driven clusters.

These organizations will benefit from the membership in the training platform. The network will maintain the communication exchanging the ideas and sharing the best case practices. They will be able to provide high quality education on the continual basis and thus gain higher credibility of their clients. The platform is planning to grow and to invite new partners to join.

3. Managers of institutions, managing programmes that support research-driven clusters in the EU

We expect the communication of the research-driven clusters managers and the supporting organizations to be improved. From long term perspective we aim for better quality of submitted proposals and moreover, into better implementation of the projects of research-driven clusters. Thus the EU funds in support for research-driven clusters will be allocated and used more effectively.

4. Final beneficiaries will be positively influenced by better quality projects of research-driven clusters.

In the post-project period the following steps are planned:

- Broadening of the InnoSee training content and updating of the e-learning platform.
- The project website will be maintained at least 2 years after the end of the project.
- Organizing of information webinars in each partner country in order to be achieved more end users of the project products.
- One year after the end of the project the stakeholders that were involved in the projects research and testing phases will be contacted in order to gain feedback on the platform.
- Establishment of European association of Trainers of research-driven clusters that will start during the International conference in Sofia.

6. Contribution to EU policies

LLP Policies

Policy: To contribute to the development of quality lifelong learning and to promote high performance, innovation and a European dimension in systems and practices in the field

The project contributes to the development of quality lifelong learning, and to promote high performance, innovation and a European dimension in systems and practices in the field of research-driven cluster management by focusing on the identification of needs and development of a platform and training tools for the specific target group of research-driven cluster managers and staff as well as broad dissemination and exploitation of project results.

Policy: To support participants in training and further training activities in the acquisition and the use of knowledge, skills and qualifications to facilitate personal development, employability and participation in the European labour market

The project aims to create training platform and tools that will improve the knowledge and skills of the current and potential research-driven clusters managers and staff. Thus it will support their training and further training activities in the acquisition and the use of knowledge, skills and qualifications to facilitate personal development, employability and participation in the European labour market of innovative and high-added value jobs.

Policy: To support improvements in quality and innovation in vocational education and training systems, institutions and practices

The project builds upon the existing knowledge at national and EU level of cluster management training and augments it by developing training materials with harmonized European context corresponding to the specific needs of the research-driven cluster managers. Thus the project supports improvements in quality and innovation in vocational education and training systems, institutions and practices

Europe 2020 Strategy

Research-driven clusters are a major lever to foster EU competitiveness in the knowledge-based economy and to achieve a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy. Project activities will contribute to the establishment and successful operations of the research-driven clusters by providing targeted and modern VET training.

Research and development, Research Framework Programme

The Regions of Knowledge action of FP7 supported the formation and development of research-driven clusters across Europe. So far several calls have been closed and a critical mass of such clusters has been achieved. However, both FP6 and FP7 do not address the needs for training of the cluster managers and members. Thus, the current project proposes to contribute towards overcoming this deficiency in the management practice of research-driven clusters.

