



## **Training for Science and Technology managers (3G-STPs)**

Progress Report

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## Project information

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## Executive Summary

Starting from their roots decades ago, Science and Technology Parks (STPs) have grown into globally recognized tools for the effective offering of various innovation support services to their main clients – start-ups and SMEs. This has been accompanied by permanent modification and enrichment of the role of STPs as bridging institutions between universities and other R&D bodies, business entities, governmental offices, and the wider public community. A STP has two main objectives. The first is to act as a catalyst for regional economic development while the second relates to facilitating the creation and development of new technology-based companies and knowledge transfer from universities to companies.

From this perspective, STPs play a central role in the European innovation system, pushing new knowledge-based economy and improving the relation between all elements in the system. Based on the *“European Economic and Social Committee on European Technology Industrial and Science Parks in the crisis management”* – opinion paper drawn on 14<sup>th</sup> of July, 2010 the following problems became evident:

- The companies, the jobs, the knowledge, the economic and innovation capacity located in STPs are hidden assets of the EU which need to be better capitalized and exploited.
- The excellence of the parks' management is a key factor for ensuring the outstanding quality of the park operation. Managers' continuous training for professional development is important to maintain the quality of services.
- Structured programmes should be available so as to build the necessary capacities in the STPs park manager organizations.

Based on this paper and the experience of several of the consortium partners, the consortium recognizes that better trained STP managers can provide better support services to the start-ups and spin-offs. The consortium has all necessary resources and knowledge to develop a comprehensive and structured 3<sup>rd</sup> generation STPs training programme (3G-STPs) to enhance the build of necessary capacities in the STP management teams. The training programme will equip the STP management team with a set of skills, which will enable them to exploit the full potential of the parks, better facilitating the needs of the existing and future tenants, bridging the gap between worlds of science and business.

The 3G-STPs programme will lead to higher satisfaction levels of tenants in relation to services provided, to higher quality of the performance of the STP managers in day-to-day operations and lead to higher quality of services delivered by STP managers training in relation of tenants declared needs. The main objective of this programme is to enhance the role of STPs in regional economic development.

## Table of Contents

1. PROJECT OBJECTIVES.....	5
2. PROJECT APPROACH.....	8
3. PROJECT OUTCOMES & RESULTS.....	13
4. PARTNERSHIPS .....	15
5. PLANS FOR THE FUTURE.....	17
6. CONTRIBUTION TO EU POLICIES .....	18

# 1. Project Objectives

Science and Technology Parks (STPs) provide the necessary nurturing environment to generate spin-off and start-ups, increasing their survival rate through a set of services and facilities offered. Their support to knowledge based companies generated from research activities of universities is a core issue and concern for the European community in the transformation to the Innovation Union. The consortium takes a joint approach in tackling this issue through professionalization of skills of STP managers, who have direct access to start-ups and spin-off and support those fragile entities in their growth and development to viable business. In addition, the knowledge spin-over effects possible between tenants of STPs and brought together by the STP manager can enhance economic development of entire regions.

In order to enhance the level of professionalism of the STP management team, the following objectives are set:

## **a) During the lifetime of the project:**

- To identify the main needs, knowledge gaps, skills and resources required for the STP managers (to be) to perform effectively to meet the needs of tenants (start ups and SMEs) and foster new entrepreneurial activities (including self-employment).
- To help STP managers (to be) to tackle the identified problem areas through a set of skills and tools necessary, as the training programme developed under this project would not only cover the main transformation aspects of science park management but also focus on "soft skills" development which is needed to build the capacity within the science park management team.
- To develop an enhanced training for the identified target group that would improve their skills and enable them to carry out their work efficiently (the quality check will be performed via pilot testing session and evaluation of the external expert, which will enable the consortium to test the relevance of the training and fine-tune it based on the feedback provided).
- To develop suitable methods and techniques of training that fit the target groups needs and requests (including the modular e-course with virtual support coach).
- Setting up a Training Faculty (from personnel and expertise of partners) who will become potential facilitators once the training programme is fully developed, tested (during the project lifetime) and delivered (after the project lifetime).
- To engage STP managers, policy makers and key stakeholders in Europe in the project through dissemination activities (workshops, invitations to events, direct emailing).
- To create an online networking platform (via LinkedIn) which will facilitate communication, knowledge sharing and support to all the STP managers in Europe (the consortium will put all efforts necessary to keep the platform

active, relevant and useful for the users, therefore, encouraging them to take an active part in the group).

- To facilitate mobility of start ups and SMEs by adding internationalization services to the STPs, resulting in 30 movements (short stays of 2-3 days to identify potential on the market).

**b) Ultimately:**

- To commercialize the project results and to provide the training programme to STP managers in Europe on yearly basis (through the efforts which consortium members are willing to put in sustaining the results of the project).
- To keep the group on LinkedIn alive and use this tool as a great networking opportunity for the STP managers.

**c) On the long run:**

- To support entrepreneurial spirit and development of start ups, generating employment opportunities in successfully managed science parks. The project will impact STP managers, ultimately contributing to the growth and development of start ups and spin-offs in Europe.

The consortium members are confident that objectives set are Specific, Measurable, Attainable and can be achieved in the using available Resources (financial and human) and Timeframes set in the proposal.

The project will benefit the following target groups in the 3G-STPs project:

**Direct target groups:**

- Experienced managers and staff of the STPs;
- Newcomers into the STP management field (STP managers with little to no experience).

Besides the direct target group, the following **indirect target groups** are specified:

- Practitioners in the field of innovation support;
- Policy-makers at national / regional levels;
- Regional Development Agencies;
- Consultancy Agencies;
- Business support organizations;
- Start-ups, spin-offs and SMEs located at the premise of the STP.

In the long-term, the consortium believes that the training programme will also be beneficial for policy makers, regional development agencies and others as they are all related to the innovation policy area and can benefit from the training programme.

The consortium will **reach and involve** these **target groups** by the following means:

- Training Needs Analysis (TNA phase) has resulted in direct involvement of **77** representatives of the STP management team who have filled-in the questionnaire (which was send out to **222** STPs);
- Besides the questionnaire, **20** STP managers where interviewed directly by the consortium partners;
- The IASP e-members will be reached with news and updates of the project throughout the project lifetime. Via this network at least one STP managers per STP in Europe, leading to involvement of about **222** STP managers;
- EBN network will lead through the involvement of **240** practitioners in the innovation field through dissemination activities;
- The Pilot Testing Phase of the project will involve at least **50** representatives of the STP management teams;
- The project was disseminated during the 22<sup>nd</sup> EBN annual conference which attracted **350** participants;
- The project will be disseminated through online communications on
  - o the 3G-STPs website <http://stp-training.eu/temp/index.php/en/homepage/general-description>)
  - o and LinkedIn Group (at this moment **166** members reaching 400 members at the end of the project life-time)
- Through a marketing campaign which will promote the project during important annual IASP and EBN events as well as events of Tehnopol.
- In parallel, each partner will have the responsibility for the implementation of the valorisation strategy within their own region and network, thus ensuring that the dissemination opportunities are realized at regional and national level.

The target for this project is to have **50** STP manager trained during the project lifetime and at least **239** STP managers once the project has ended.

## 2. Project Approach

### Methodologies, surveys, analyses and tests carried out

The 3G-STPs project will entail a total of seven work packages (WPs). Some of them will have duration of few months while others will run during the entire project lifetime. These WPs were created in order to structure the development of the training material and to include as many representative of the target groups as possible.

### WP1: Project coordination

The aim of this WP is to ensure that the project is implemented and completed successfully and within the parameters determined during the planning stage, most importantly parameters referring to time schedule, quality and budget. In addition, this WP includes overall and day-to-day coordination and management by one consortium partner. The coordination will guarantee the correct implementation of the project and the accomplishment of the planned objectives and milestones at the appointed dates. It is necessary to implement mechanisms to gather continuous feedback and involvement of the entire consortium. In order to have fruitful project management, the following methods will be used:

- 4 coordination partner meetings (3 have already been) to discuss the particular project phases and results created so far;
- Project information package outlining was provided to all partners which included: Partners agreement, Roadmap and methodology, deadlines, partners' contribution, milestones and controls;
- Quarterly TO DO lists, followed by Skype partner conferences calls to monitor the progress;
- Semi-annual partners' progress reports (financial expenditure, tasks performed, and dissemination activities).

### WP2: European STP managers training needs analysis - finished

The aim of this WP was to develop a methodology and tools to carry out the training needs analysis homogeneously (TNA) among the direct target groups. Secondly, the information gathered was analyzed and used as input for the subsequent WP. The target groups profiles and existing needs, knowledge gaps and training delivery methods preferred are clarified based on this WP. The following methods were used:

- Guidelines and templates for TNA, which included instructions on data collection:
  - o a) primary research (online questionnaires (sent to 222 STP managers in Europe) and in-dept interviews (20 STP managers));
  - o b) secondary research: available publications and material resulting in national desk-research performed by all partners;
- TNA report: summarizing the results and findings in a structural manner;
- A workshop and meetings were held at national and European levels to present the TNA outcomes to target groups, policy makers and stakeholders;

The results of this WP are used as input to the development of the actual training material.

### **WP3: Development of the training material**

As explained above, using the main outcomes from the TNA phase the next phase starts; the development of the training material. A collection of world's best practices will be used to create a practical and up-to-date programme. In order for this to happen, the following methods will be used:

- Creation of templates for the selection of best practices and conversion into modules by making use of theory. In addition, templates are created for the lay-out of the modules;
- The best-practices selected were tested by experts from IASP on their general applicability to STP management;
- Based on this assessment, the partners started to develop the actual modules (the phase we are in now) which will be converted in draft training toolkit to be used in the pilot testing phase (WP4).
- Modular e-course with virtual coach support will also be created in this WP. This entails a web-based tool where trainees can get access to: a) entry level test; b) tailor-made training path; c) training package in downloadable form; d) interactive tools: possibility to post questions to the trainers
- Finally, the Training Faculty will be set-up which includes the identification and selection of relevant trainers & facilitators for the training programme.

Once the modules are finished, the contents and quality will be evaluated by the partners using a cross-reference matrix. This entails that each partner will check 2 modules (other than their own) and provides feedback.

### **WP4: Pilot testing and evaluation**

In order to validate the relevance and coherency of the training programme, the pilot testing phase will include the target groups of this project. In total, at least **50** representatives of STP management teams will be selected to test the training programme developed. The following tools will be created for this phase:

- Pilot testing guidelines and templates, a set of instructions for the partners conducting the pilot test;
- Pre and Post-training assessment questionnaires, evaluating the participants' expectations and the quality and applicability of the training programme;
- Pilot testing session will be organized during IASP pre-conference/workshops, attracting 50 participants (# is based on the attendance in previous IASP events);

### **WP5: Quality assurance and fine-tuning**

In addition to the pilot test done by target group representatives, the consortium would also like to ask at least 2 external experts in the field of STP management to check the content of the training programme. This in order to ensure high quality of the programme and fine-tune the training material based on the feedback. The tools to be created are:

- An evaluation report will be created based on the feedback from the target group representative and external experts;
- Based on the evaluation report, the consortium will fine-tune the training programme and provide the final version of the training toolkit.

The quality control will be guaranteed through a double mechanism: 1) internal quality control focused on partner cooperation and achievements; 2) external quality control focused on quality and relevance of the final outputs will be implemented through involvement of target groups especially in WP2, WP4, WP5.

### **Dissemination and exploitation strategy (WP6 and WP7)**

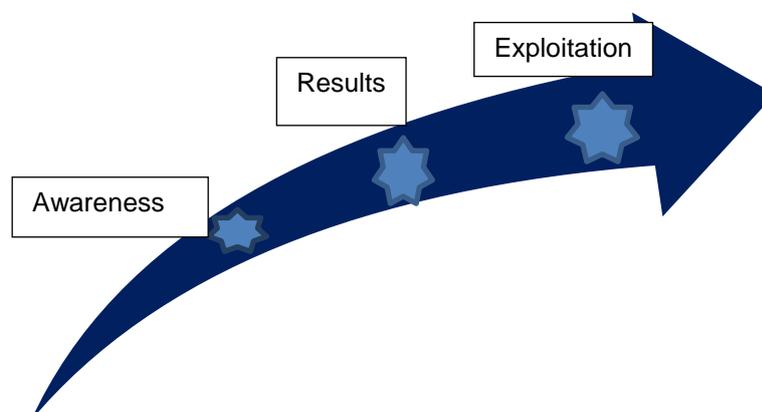
In order to create awareness among the target groups and engage stakeholders in the project. This will ensure that the project results meet the needs of the target groups. Eventually, the involvement and update of the target groups will lead to higher chances of successful commercialization after the project lifetime. The dissemination activities will be designed to reach a broad audience, especially the target groups. The consortium will stimulate and encourage them to provide constructive and relevant input and feedback and actively participate in various forms of interaction in order to set-up the best possible training programme.

Dissemination activities will cover the lifetime of the project, ensuring continuous dissemination of all relevant project information, activities and events during the following three phases:

**1) Awareness-oriented phase:** to raise awareness within a qualified community about the project and engage the target groups all over Europe to participate in testing and exploitation of results. This involves activities such as: announcing the project objectives, starting online presence (e.g. website, social networks), etc.;

**2) Result-oriented phase:** to promote the result of the projects, informing interested parties about the achievements and the related benefits of the project, and build new contacts and relations for the involvement of European stakeholders in the activities;

**3) Exploitation-oriented phase:** to exploit project results successfully. This stage is also related to the promotion of the future sustainability of the project with activities such as announcing final results and achievements of the project, presenting the advantages of materials and services developed and identifying stakeholders willing to promote the results in the future.



This will be achieved through utilizing various communication tools and

channels, including website, flyer, brochures, publications, as well as events and workshops. The Dissemination Plan was created with detailed guidelines and tools which will help the consortium to:

- Understand the scope and objectives of dissemination and communication within the project;
- Understand the importance and crucial moments of internal communication between partners to implement well-coordinated dissemination and communication activities during the project;
- Have access to an organized and harmonised set of tools that can be used for external dissemination and communication purposes;
- Have a clear idea of the different types of activities that will be implemented, the timing, the target groups and the expected impact (indicators);
- Have an overall communication and dissemination strategy for the implementation of activities including a regular review system and update of the proposed strategy;
- Outline how results will be used and exploited by the consortium and how the results will be made known and accessible to the community.

The promotion and dissemination activities which will achieve the objectives of the 3G-STPs project are based on the following innovative dissemination instruments and approaches:

- **Multi-channel and two-way communication flows:** Target group communities will be reached through a combination of web-based and face-to-face dissemination channels in order to maximize the dissemination results. 3G-STPs dissemination tools and activities will enable a two-way communication flow with the stakeholders; on one hand, they will deliver information about the project, on the other hand they will allow feedback and input from stakeholders to participate actively in the project development.
- **Integration of different Web 2.0 tools:** The project will use Web 2.0 tools including a professional social network (LinkedIn), to allow communication with project stakeholders.
- **Effective dissemination monitoring system:** EBN will harvest inputs from other partners regarding the dissemination activities and provide an internal communication and dissemination progress report every six months, summarizing the dissemination results, providing suggestions on improvement and adjustments, as well as outlining next steps. This will help improving the dissemination strategy and maximize the audience reached.

The **preliminary sustainability strategy** of this project is envisioned in the following manner: the consortium realizes the commercial potential of the main final outcome of the project (which will include a Training Toolkit and Faculty) and sees the opportunity of delivering this created material by providing training in Europe. IASP would be the most appropriate partner who can ensure the training delivery to the direct target groups. Therefore, the training will be added to the list of services that IASP provides to its members. IASP is willing to carry out the organization and administrative aspects associated with the training delivery.

**Added value of the approach used:**

The approaches described above were chosen in order to reach the main objectives of the project.

Pedagogical perspective: The project aims to increase the professionalism and skills of the managers of SMEs through the exchange of practices, methods and pedagogical approaches. Therefore, the thorough TNA analysis was conducted among target groups to determine the gaps in knowledge and skills. Furthermore, the definition of the Training framework to match the needs of the target groups, by providing a suitable training programme, was developed.

Organizational perspective: Existing training offers and programmes are normally designed and organised from the point of view of larger companies. They simply don't fit into the organisational needs of smaller companies, given the complexity of their nature. Therefore, the consortium is determined to create an innovative training programme, which matches the target groups needs not only from the content point of view but also from the training delivery approach taken, making the training more accessible, attractive and useful.

The added value of our European partnership is based not only on the capability to prepare high quality training curriculum but also deliver and disseminate the developed practices and bring that knowledge to the market as an exploitable product.

### 3. Project Outcomes & Results

The subsequent table shows the project outcomes and results so far. They reflect major achievements and results during the first year of the 3G-STPs project lifetime. In addition, the impact of these outcomes on the target groups is briefly described.

<i>Results</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Availability</i>
<b>1. Roadmap, Coordination and Monitoring results:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Project info pack</li> <li>- Project meeting minutes</li> <li>- Project check-lists</li> </ul>	During the first year of the project lifetime, the project coordinator created roadmaps, coordination and monitoring parameters which the consortium used as basis. The impact of these outcomes remained confidential between the 7 partners in the consortium.	
<b>2. SMEs Training Needs Analysis (TNA):</b>	This part of the project allowed the consortium to gather sufficient information regarding the characteristics of the target groups. This resulted in the first engagement of the target groups in the project. As a result the consortium has found the training needs, the level of knowledge on the subject and the training method preferred amongst the target groups. This phase of the project ensured matching between the needs of the target groups and the training material developed. As this was an important part of the project the following outputs were developed:	Within the TNA 222 STP managers were targeted. 77 Questionnaires were filled-in and 20 STP managers were interviewed. The impact of this phase was considerable.
<i>a) Guidelines and templates for the SMEs TNAs</i>	These guidelines and templates provided instructions and tools for the consortium on how to carry out the TNA, this included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Guidelines on how to carry out the TNA;</li> <li>- Definition of methodology;</li> <li>- Templates for in-dept interview with STP managers throughout Europe.</li> </ul>	This deliverable is available on ADAM.
<i>b) European STP managers TNA report</i>	This summarizes findings of the primary desk-research, the questionnaires and the in-dept interviews. Based on this report and the additional input of the meetings and workshop, the training material will be developed.	
<i>c) 7 meetings "Role of STPs in regional development"</i>	Each partner has organized a regional meeting with representatives of STP stakeholders. In this meeting the results of the TNA report were discussed and additional feedback was generated.	30 participants in the meetings. This deliverable is available on ADAM.
<i>d) Workshop "Role of STPs in regional development"</i>	During the EBN Congress in May 2013, a workshop was held with STP representatives to discuss the TNA report and the role of STPs in regional development.	7 participants in the workshop. This deliverable is available on ADAM.
<b>3. Dissemination of results:</b>	The subsequent outputs were created in the first year of the 3G-STPs project.	

a) <i>Dissemination plan</i>	A dissemination strategy was created in this plan in order to schedule promotional outputs and requirements from the partners to be active in the dissemination of the results. This plan included the project graphical identity (logo), online and offline promotional actions. These actions are described below:	
b) <i>Project website</i>	The project website was created during the beginning of the project in order to create awareness among the target group. It includes information on the project, the main results, the partnership and relevant news and events on the internationalisation of SMEs. The main language on this website is English in order to reach a wide audience. Nevertheless, some of the content is also presented in Spanish, French, Italian, Dutch and Estonian (the national languages of the partners).	Visit <a href="http://stp-training.eu/temp/index.php/en/about-the-project/objectives-and-activities">http://stp-training.eu/temp/index.php/en/about-the-project/objectives-and-activities</a>
c) <i>Project Brochure</i>	A project brochure was created to disseminate the project during participation of events. Key information about this project is displayed. The brochure was created in English, Spanish, French, Italian, Dutch and Estonian.	This deliverable is available on ADAM.
d) <i>Project presentation</i>	As an offline tool, a project presentation is created in order to disseminate the project on events. This presentation entails the aims and objectives of the project as well as teasers of the specific module contents.	
e) <i>Professional group on LinkedIn</i>	A LinkedIn professional group is created and serves as online support tool to encourage exchange of practices, experience as well as create a community of practice.	166 members at this moment. Visit <a href="http://www.linkedin.com/groups/3GSTPs-Training-Science-Technology-Park-4819831">http://www.linkedin.com/groups/3GSTPs-Training-Science-Technology-Park-4819831</a>
f) <i>Events</i>	Several regional or national events were used for the dissemination of the project. However, until now 1 trans-national events took place: - 3G STPs dissemination was done during the 22 <sup>nd</sup> Annual EBN Congress in which 350 participants joined (May, 2013 in Londonderry, Northern-Ireland).	A full list of dissemination activities can be found as annex as well.

## 4. Partnerships

The consortium is a public-private partnership of experienced networks, associations, private companies and universities that are willing to work together to achieve the common objective. The consortium contains organizations which have a long history of successfully executed projects, including development and delivery of training programmes. It includes experienced members in the field of science park management, innovation support, training development and delivery on various topics. Moreover, 2 representatives of the direct target group are members of the consortium, Tehnopol and CUE. Consortium members will be involved directly in every stage of this project, contributing to the quality control of the project.

The consortium is composed of divers' organizations including associations, enterprises, not-for-profit association and a public body, providing sufficient geographical coverage. The consortium has covers the following representing European community;

- As a whole (EBN and IASP)
- Western Europe (NL – Zernike, BE – EBN, UK - CUE)
- Southern Europe (IT – Meta, ES – Funditec & IASP)
- Baltic States (EE- Tehnopol)

The consortium complementarities are also demonstrated by involvement of practitioners in the field (Zernike, Meta and Funditec), professional bodies (IASP and EBN) as well as representative of the target groups (Tallinn Science Park, Coventry Technology Park).

This European consortium and mix approach will enhance the value of the 3G-STPs programme because of the following reasons:

- Spin-offs and start-ups support is an European priority in building an Innovation Union.
- A systematic approach in tackling this challenge can be taken by improving the performance of STPs in Europe through professionalization of their staff to provide better tailored services to the tenants, including internationalization and mobility.
- The project will better link the EU community of STP managers and encourage collaboration through trainings and events.
- The Europe-wide TNA has identified the specific current needs of target groups and their profiles and characteristics.
- Preparing high quality curriculum based on experience in the field and input in teaching methodologies (Zernike, Meta, Funditec, IASP, CUE), use of good practices (IASP, CUE) focussing on specific needs of emerging STPs (Tehnopol) which can only be achieve through expertise-sharing within the consortium.
- Setting up a Training Faculty who will become potential trainers and facilitators once the training programmes is fully developed, tested (during the project lifetime) and delivered (after the project lifetime).

- Carrying out the mobility of 30 STP tenants within Europe.
- Maximizing the impact of the training by involving target groups and disseminating the training results among them, using expertise in developing dissemination plans and strategies of EBN and networks of both EBN and IASP.
- Bringing that knowledge to the market as an exploitable product as well as capacity and ability to facilitate such training.
- Effective use of past experience will avoid unnecessary time wastages, resources and finances.

Cross-fertilization between transnational partners of ideas, procedures, personnel, and systems will add value to project activities by providing a broad base of knowledge and expertise. This amalgam of different aspects of resolving issues and the strong points in proposing ideas bring insightful ways of moving on with the project.

## 5. Plans for the Future

At this stage of the project, the training needs analysis as well as the guidelines for the development of training material has been completed and the next step of the project's team is to develop the actual modules. The next steps will be:

- Development of the training material based on good practices that already have been reviewed and approved by experts of IASP.
- Conversion of the content of the training into the Training Toolkit.
- Development of modular e-course with virtual coach support.
- Development of the Training Faculty.

After the completion of the training materials, the consortium will test and evaluate its relevance and coherency to the target groups needs, ensuring high quality of results. Specifically the following actions are envisaged:

- Development of the pilot testing guidelines and templates
- Pilot testing sessions

Additional quality assurance and fine-tuning will be done based on the pilot testing and the evaluation report (in which external experts will also review the training material). Based on this report, the Training Toolkit will be finalized.

It should also be noted that the consortium will perform a number of awareness raising activities during the project life time, so as to disseminate and exploit the project and its main results. Specifically, the project partners aim to create awareness and ensure the training programme sustainability in the long run through printing materials and organising/attending events. Moreover, during the project a number of exploitation activities will be undertaken in order to ensure the sustainability of the project results after its lifetime.

## 6. Contribution to EU policies

Within the LLP priority area, new skills for new jobs, self employment, job creation and entrepreneurship support, bridging the worlds of education and work, are key factors in crisis economy.

The 3G-STPs project will aid this priority area because the innovative milieu on STPs lead to a significant higher firm growth in terms of sales and jobs compared to similar off-park firms. STPs create excellent environment and an ecosystem to foster innovation and entrepreneurship, ultimately contributing to jobs creation and transfer of knowledge from universities to the market (spin-offs). According to the IASP facts and figures there are 125.000 companies located at the premises of STPs worldwide and 50% of STPs host 100 companies on average.

In addition, the European Union acknowledges that SMEs are the driving force for the economic growth and sustainable development of Europe. The “Small Business Act”, which released by the European Commission in 2008, is a comprehensive SME policy framework, emphasizing the key role and political importance of SMEs for the European economy after all the SME is the engine of the economy. The need for the supporting of SMEs was also documented in the Lisbon strategy and has been further confirmed as one of the main objectives of the “Europe 2020 Strategy”.

The project will encourage internationalization and better linkages between STPs. The training programme and dissemination activities will ensure collaboration and exchange of practices as well as transfer of knowledge among the target groups.

Mobility of SMEs (tenants of the STPs) will be introduced in the project, facilitating the exchange of tenants among the parks as a measure to foster growth and development within SMEs.

The 3G-STPs project is in-line with the respective EU policies, as the project will address the main challenges of the STP management team and support the development of start-ups and spin-offs which developing SMEs. Given the high complexity of the profession and lack of time for training, the consortium will introduce innovative learning elements and include as many practical examples (in the form of good / bad practices) as possible.

