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Innovation Management & Transnational Partnership

Training for SMEs and Start-ups / Entrepreneurs – Handbook

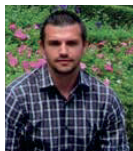




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INTRODUCTION

The training handbook you are holding in your hands is one of the out outputs of the Coordination & Support Action project FP7-INCO-2013-9 R2I-ENP, project no. 609531 – “*Knowledge Transfer Community to bridge the gap between research, innovation and business creation*” - acronym NoGAP, coordinated by Steinbeis-Europa-Zentrum of Steinbeis Innovation gGmbH, Germany, in which 13 partners from 6 European countries are cooperating to help foster innovation and technology transfer throughout the European Union and the Eastern Partnership.

The Technical University of Cluj-Napoca, through the Danube Innovation and Technology Transfer Centre, together with the National Technical University of Ukraine, Kyiv Polytechnic Institute, the Union of Slovak Clusters and Steinbeis-Europa-Zentrum have cooperated within this project to develop 3 training handbooks aimed at the three main target groups involved in the process of knowledge creation and valuation: the researchers, the companies (mostly SMEs, start-ups and entrepreneurs) and the information multipliers. Based on these handbooks, trainings will be delivered in each of the countries of the Eastern Partnership to help in spreading a culture of cooperation among these entities in order to better serve the social and economic development, especially related to the societal challenge “secure, clean and efficient energy”.

The training handbook aimed at SMEs, start-ups and entrepreneurs presents the most important issues related to Innovation management and Transnational partnership, which are considered as keys in “bridging the gap” that currently exists between the scientific contributions and business opportunities connected to the field of renewable energy. The handbook has strong interactive and practical features that will make it more impactful upon delivery to the participants. Its structure includes 5 chapters, as well as an Introduction, a Glossary and the References section.

Chapter 1 includes a short overview of the main motivations and trends that exist related to innovation in companies, as well as an introduction to the basic concepts of the field. A large portion of the chapter is dedicated to an interactive questionnaire that will be used in the actual trainings for assessing the organizational innovation potential and creativity level within a company. Based on the participant’s feedback, a discussion and debated concerning innovation management will help the trainees gain their own perspective on the topic.

Chapter 2 discusses some of the current models that the specialty literature presents related to actually stimulating, managing and valuating innovation management in firms. Besides presenting the way these models are structured and work, the chapter brings

some important clarifications in understanding the relationship between improvements and innovations. Moreover, a sub-chapter is dedicated to implementing innovation management in companies through projects.

Chapter 3 is a very practical one and presents a package of the most important tools used in the field of innovation and new product development for conducting successful deployments. These includes methods for discovering and understanding requirements (e.g. brainstorming, voice of the customer table, Kano analysis), methods for processing requirements and establishing product or service characteristics (Quality Function Deployment), as well as methods for deciding upon implementation solutions (Pugh's New concept selection method). A complete example, going through all the stages of an innovation project, is presented with focus on the renewable energy sector.

Chapter 4 presents an introduction to the topic of Transnational partnership, that will help (the small) companies in tackling the challenges in starting to "think big" in terms of scope, impact and collaboration networks.

The authors and trainers wish to express their thanks to all the project partners and to everybody that has contributed to this training handbook. It is our hope that, in a small part, all of our actions here will contribute to a better future.

The authors and the trainers

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Basics of innovation

In this new economic context in which we find ourselves during this period of the 21st century, a period in which economy is already global, the practice of innovation has become critical in achieving success in any endeavor. In this new stage of the world economy, the evolution of society is impacted by great advances in ownership and distribution of information and knowledge, as well as by continuous need for the management of change.

The need for innovation

Innovation has an important role because it can restructure, refocus and harmonize companies and countries with the new requirements of the economy, by enabling them to achieve durable competitive advantages. Innovation represents the means through which creativity is valorized on the market. The development and deployment of innovative products and services has to constitute the main objective of any company, because through them the company will increase its level of competitiveness.

It can be asserted that in a globalized market, innovation is the engine of economic growth and development of kind of entity. By harnessing creativity and development and incorporating these two into existing products and services, consumer demands are satisfied, and new market segments are created.

In terms of tools of innovation and economic cycles, characterized by technical-scientific developments, (Christensen 2003) makes a differentiation between the adoptions of innovations related to customer requirements: “disruptive innovation” and “support innovation”. Support innovation is correlated with consumer demands, having as objective the improvement of existing products and services. Disruptive innovation generates improvements far above expectations, thus creating new markets instead of seizing existing ones.

A series of management models were created in the course of time, oriented towards innovation, which attempted to develop principles, stages and processes by which ideas become innovation within an organization. Also, a series of authors have proposed