

InnoCoop – enhancing policy instruments fostering innovation-oriented business cooperation of SMEs based on the triple helix model

Specific objective: SO 1.3. SME competitiveness

Rationale

Value-added innovative cooperation of companies can be regarded as a huge development potential for regional development. Improvement of cooperative attitude and inclination of SMEs expand their market opportunities contributing to the economic resilience of regional companies which has become increasingly important due to the Covid pandemic and soaring raw material and energy prices.

Innovation-oriented business cooperation faces multiple challenges due to the weaknesses of the different segments of the triple helix model of innovation, both within and across borders. The main challenges in terms of the different segments of the triple helix are as follows:

- Private sector: SMEs are usually in lack of information about other economic players' business operations hindering establishment of value-added business cooperation where SMEs can build on each other's strengths that can provide comparative advantages for all players. This is especially true for innovation-based developments where building trust between economic players poses additional obstacles to cooperation. SMEs usually lack of knowledge and financial resources needed for active participation in cooperative innovation chain.
- Public sector: public business support organisations (chambers, enterprise development organisations, sectoral clusters, innovation and technology centres) are weak and do not provide effective support to innovation-based economic cooperation of local companies.
- Academia: engagement and active participation of knowledge centre institutions (universities, research institutions and their affiliates) in innovative SME business cooperation are rather diverse across Europe. These institutions often fail to provide hands-on and practical service to the SMEs and the economic players are also reluctant to establish operative cooperation with them.

Project objectives

Overall objective of InnoCoop project is to better exploit development potential of innovation-oriented business cooperation across Europe.

Specific objectives:

- Definition of criteria set and elaboration of hands-on model for fostering innovation-based cooperation of SMEs with involvement of all components of the triple helix model, taking into account the different factors influencing value-added innovative business cooperation.

- Raise the awareness and increase the number of valuable and feasible business partnership between SMEs and between SMEs and the knowledge centre institutions.
- Improvement of policy instruments in different regions focusing on fostering improvement of product and service innovation on the basis of SME cooperation.

Project content

1) Joint assessment

Detailed survey and assessment of ongoing regional and international policy instruments fostering SME cooperation focusing on innovation development. The survey encompasses the setup of a joint evaluation methodology and joint assessment of different instruments, collecting best practices and main obstacles.

Classification of instruments based on various factors, inter alia:

- phases of innovation (industrial research, research and development, product and service innovation),
- sectoral and company-size aspects (sector-orientation, targeted types of SMEs),
- types of funding (pre-seed, seed, development, business etc.),
- types of business cooperation (cooperation within the same sector, value-chain cooperation including SMEs operating in different sectors),
- territorial scope (regional, national, international funding instruments),
- involvement of public (business support organisations) and academia (knowledge centre institutions) actors in fostering innovative SME cooperation.

2) Knowledge transfer

Joint training curriculum and regional trainings with the aim of exchange of good practices with involvement of all components of the triple helix: regional SMEs, knowledge centres and business support organisations.

Main focus areas of trainings:

- effective techniques for match-making of SMEs,
- methods for development of joint innovative SME development projects,
- role of business support organisations in providing technical assistance for SMEs fostering their innovative business cooperation,
- role of knowledge centres in providing R&D services for innovative economic development of SMEs.

Study visits for project partners to get acquainted with each other's good practices at regional level with involvement of main stakeholders of the triple helix.

3) Improvement of policy instruments

Elaboration of regional policy papers for improvement of regional policy instruments focusing on innovative SME cooperation, based on the lessons learnt from InnoCoop project cooperation.

Regional policy papers include recommendations for improvement of regional instruments according to the following aspects:

- Modification of the content of the regional policy instruments (targeted beneficiaries, territorial specifications, supported activities, eligible costs).
- Raising the effectiveness of SME – academia cooperation in innovative developments.
- Introduction of tailor-made supporting scheme for better targeting cooperating SMEs (involvement of different business support organisations in supporting scheme, methodologies for fostering awareness raising and business cooperation, elaboration of effective incentive schemes).
- Management of regional policy instruments (managing bodies to be included, evaluation criteria for cooperative SME project selection, monitoring of effectiveness of policy instrument management).

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