



THE
INNOVATION
ALLIANCE

active alliances

stakeholders

development

2/2016 Innovation Alliance E-Zine

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Innovation Alliance Final Event

The Innovation Alliance content has been released to a wide international audience of researchers, academics, higher education managers and entrepreneurs. During the three day ISBE conference, that took place in Paris (France) from October 26 to 28, the Innovation Alliance project partners shared their thoughts, insights and project outcomes through a keynote presentation by Joe English (Meath County Council), a plenary panel contribution by Dr. Conor Patterson (Newry and Mourne Enterprise Agency) and a one-and-a-half-hour long Innovation Alliance presentation and discussion. These contributions with the over 300 participants from across Europe have led to a wide number of interesting interactions and indications of interest in the alliances, the toolkit and SME training course.

In addition to the presentation, the Innovation Alliance project had a stand in the breakroom, offering information on its project activities and success stories (e.g. Co-Innovate project, a €18 million project, supporting over 1,400 SMEs in Ireland and the UK). More than 50 business cards were distributed amongst the conference participants and are helping to develop new relationships to further build upon the important work of the Innovation Alliance project.

“The Innovation Alliance launch event provided a large variety of educators, innovators and entrepreneurs with access to the toolkit, SME training course and other project outcomes”

Development of the Alliances

Romanian Innovation Alliance pushes to close the innovation loop

Over the past year, Romanian Alliance has directed their attention to three streams of actions: developing methods for patent transfer from universities to the SMEs, launching platforms to pool national and European project efforts, and incorporating mechanisms to facilitate technology transfer process. A solid progress has been achieved for the first two goals, however, the challenges with the expansion of Technology Transfer Offices (TTOs) as links between Romanian businesses and the academic community remain to be tackled.

The gold medal award-winning patent request in the International Exhibition of Inventions Geneva 2015 is currently in the testing phase, which is later to be implemented in a market product with a local SME at a later stage. On the other hand, it is also acknowledged by the alliance that Romanian Universities lack sufficient number of TTOs that hold the key role in transforming the methodology into a common practice across the country. The consortium members thus aim to establish such offices through the alliance in order to guarantee long-term partnerships between HEIs and SMEs.

According to the progress report by the members, collaboration platforms for the joint project submissions have proven productive, with six project proposals already submitted by the project members for the June 2016 National project call 'Increasing competitiveness of the Romanian economy through R & D and innovation.' Other benefits included sustainable business growth for the SMEs, finding outlets for patent transfer for the HEIs, and opportunities for the EU research project participation for the research institutions. The consortium provides unique learning experiences for the graduate students as well, through the training courses which will encourage them to start their own businesses and to eventually join the alliance in the long run.

Intensified cooperation in Halle Regional Alliance

The Halle region has addressed a number of challenges, found in their benchmark study 'Science Scorecard'. Through increased branding activities, the alliance was able to better engage with stakeholders, in addition to a number of events that have led to stronger relationships and an increase in cooperation between the various stakeholders involved.

The benchmark study "Science Scorecard" carried out by the "Stifterverband für die Deutsche Wissenschaft" has produced its results, providing the project stakeholders a realistic picture of their status within the regional innovation infrastructure and pinpointing shortcomings. Upon the examination of the outcomes, recommendations have been drawn accordingly, to reduce the impact of the established weaknesses and ensure commitment of the consortium members at all levels. The alliance reported to have overcome one of its main challenges of identifying relevant stakeholders that are willing to establish sustainable cooperation. According to the members, in the beginning the lack of institutionalization did not allow effective implementation of the project actions on the working level. The solution was later introduced through the development of a new brand name and a common goal for the alliance that helped build a feeling of ownership and sense of commitment among all participating individuals.

In addition to the actions taken in reference to the recommendations of the benchmark study, the Alliance has organized internal and external joint events, such as 'Long Night of Science', and 'TransHAL', a technology transfer event, in order to build upon and expand the synergies among the consortium members. Some of the other finalized project actions included funding applications on the regional level, alliance website design, EU level joint project submissions, and a clear definition of the alliance vision statement. Furthermore, the Halle Regional Alliance

listed mounting benefits of the partnerships for the participating SMEs, higher education institutions (HEIs), and other member organizations. For example, the number of SMEs that build strong relationships with HEIs and research institutes has grown, HEIs practice sustainable knowledge transfer through their cooperation with SMEs, and finally local government organizations benefit from the increased reputation of the region, as well as an increase in awareness of innovation potentials and Horizon 2020 funding opportunities.

The Brexit and its effect on a cross-border Innovation Alliance

The Cross Border Alliance which is based in the border region of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland potentially faces a new set of barriers to trading/working, in some cases those barriers that threaten their existence. With the UK having voted to leave the EU a large number of stakeholders see their efforts for acquiring funding for future projects endangered.

Just over a few months ago, a working group comprised of Intertrade Ireland, NMEA/Louth LEO, representatives of the University of Ulster, Dundalk Institute of Technology, Sligo Institute of Technology and Letterkenny Institute of Technology, along with the recent addition of Scottish Enterprise & Highlands and Islands Enterprise submitted the SME Innovation support program 'Co-Innovate'. The program aims to increase cross-border research and innovation collaboration of Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland, and the west of Scotland, targeting a 10% increase in the joint innovation activities by the year 2023.

The partners called for a meeting to discuss the implications of a potential Brexit for the NI/ROI border region. The consensus was that Brexit could seriously effect the process of cross border knowledge transfer through which HEI research and innovations flows into the business community. A high profile lobbying campaign followed which contributed to the debate in the run up to the referendum. Despite a substantial majority of the NI population voting to remain in the EU the overall national result was to leave. This result was the impetus for "Economic and Political Stability Symposium" to be convened. Alliance partners participated in the high profile event in September 2016 with

Promoting innovation and entrepreneurship in Europe

In our constant endeavour to disseminate the project results and create awareness for the project activities the dissemination and promotion occurs through multiple channels, for example event organisation, participation, communicating results to local policymakers.



government, community and business representatives from across the island of Ireland discussing how best to protect the region from an economic shocks associated with the Brexit process.

The Spanish Software Testing Alliance goes European

After its launch in June 2015, the Spanish Software Testing Innovation Alliance has organized 4 successful events in 4 different regions in Spain: Valencia, Andalusia, Aragon and the Basque country. During these events, Spanish academia and industry are brought together to brainstorm and discuss how cooperation can improve innovation in software testing in Spain. Universities can elevator-pitch their R\&D results on software testing indicating: what they have, how it can help companies and who has already used it successfully. SMEs on the other hand get a short time slot to explain their current practice on software testing and the problems, challenges and needs they have. After the presentations, speed-dating session are carried out, in a way that every university representative meets up with each SME present.

In Salamanca, the results of the Spanish alliance have been presented. On the 18th of November the first European Software Testing Innovation Alliance has taken place in Amsterdam following the same successful format.



Comparative case study now available!

The comparative study describes the results of applying three different methodologies for innovation transfer between HEIs and SMEs, assessing their effectiveness and publishing the results for consultation by other interested parties.

In order to compare three different methodologies for innovation transfer between HEIs and SMEs, we chose an HEI result from one of the academic project partners and apply three different methodologies based on Collaborative Research and Development (R&D) to transfer it to three different companies.

The HEI research result that was used to do the studies is a software testing tool called TESTAR that was developed at the UPV in the context of an EU research project in the FP7 programme. The companies to which the results were transferred are: B&M (Germany), Clavel (Spain) and Softeam (France).

You will find the comparative study on our website at: www.innovationalliance.eu



SME Innovation Training Course

Are you a small or medium-sized enterprise interested in initiating a collaborative partnership with a Higher Education Institution? However, are you lacking relevant knowledge and skills to get you started?

The Innovation Alliance invites you and your team to enroll in a newly launched, free, and a self-paced online SME Innovation Training Course to effectively engage with Higher Education Institutions for long-term business productivity and growth. You can visit the learning portal at www.innovation-alliance.eu

The course aims to build on and expand your abilities by assisting you through the systematically arranged content, while offering you the flexibility to learn anywhere, at any time. The self-paced and online nature of the course ensures it is easy to fit the program into your schedule.

What is in it for you?

The SME Innovation Training Course is structured in five modules, complemented by case studies and SME Horizon 2020 Readiness Database that is easily accessible through the alliance website.

The course contains the following modules:

- Module 1. Understanding Academia
- Module 2. Understanding and Presenting your Needs
- Module 3. Growing your Collaborative Competences
- Module 4. Understanding Horizon 2020 Funding
- Module 5. How to initiate Contact with a Higher Education Institute (HEI) and Demonstrate Capacity

The modules are structured in a number of units, each of which uncover different areas of focus in the learning package. Course content is enriched by informative infographics, videos, questions and exercises to deepen understanding, and references after each module for further reading. As the course modules provide a wealth of information by covering the tools and strategies for initiating successful business-academia collaboration, module six includes an optional final exam with 10 questions, after which you receive the free Certificate of Completion.

How to Benefit from the Project?

The Innovation Alliance project provides a wide variety of benefits for all stakeholders involved, specifically:

- Innovation stakeholders from the higher education sector, the enterprise support sector and public bodies charged with innovation development, will experience attitudinal and behavioural change, enabling a much greater degree of information sharing and collaborative action than was present prior to the project. This will generate long term support for innovation partnerships.
- SME owner managers will benefit a) individually, given that they will increase their knowledge and transversal business skills and b) professionally, as their SME will be listed on the matchmaking HEI-SME database. In the long term, SMEs will be more innovative, will create greater added value, be more competitive and achieve higher growth.
- SME participants in the comparative methodology study will gain an expert guided transfer with high probability of success and in the long run, their contribution will establish best practice for HEIs wishing to embark on their own transfers of innovation research or technology.
- HEIs will gain the knowledge and confidence to engage in more partnerships with SMEs, both by accessing the matchmaking function, implementing best practice in transfer processes, also regaining their leadership role in regional innovation promotion through their role in the Innovation Alliances.

Contact details:

Sarah Mallon
Project Manager
Local Enterprise Office Louth
Town Hall, Crowe Street
Dundalk
Ireland

P: +353 1890 202 303
E: sarah.mallon@leo.louthcoco.ie

Our Project Team

The Innovation Alliance is an Erasmus+ Knowledge Alliance project led by Louth County Council and integrates seven additional key partners from six countries. The consortium has been formed strategically to bring together all those competencies and experiences needed to exploit the full value of the Innovation Alliances across Europe.

A dynamic team of practitioners:

We strongly believe in partnerships and collaboration
Making a true impact is our core goal with all activities being designed to reach this goal

- Louth County Council, Ireland
- Meath County Council, Ireland
- Newry and Mourne Cooperative, United Kingdom
- MindShare Consulting, France
- Canice Consulting, United Kingdom
- The University Industry Innovation Network, The Netherlands
- Universitat Politècnica de València, Spain
- Universitatea Politehnica din Bucuresti, Romania
- Univations GmbH, Germany





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CONTACT

Sarah Mallon
Project Manager
Local Enterprise Office Louth
Town Hall, Crowe Street
Dundalk
Ireland

P: +353 1890 202 303

E: sarah.mallon@leo.louthcoco.ie

