



Action Plan: Lubelskie Voivodeship

Introduction

The current global pandemic situation reflected on all areas including social and economic ones. It is a time, where call for sustainable development and socially responsible economy is even more important. A tool to facilitate the development is a technological change to overcome various types of issues, both technological and economical, is cooperation between experts and those who need assistance. Here we narrow the group to SME's representatives and the experts from Higher Education Institutions (HEI). SME's representatives come to a coordinator – for example "Technological pilot" in Lubelskie, describing a problem or chance that an expert can assist in, then the coordinator finds an expert in the domain who later assist the SME in need.

The idea is not new, there are many programs to facilitate such cooperation, like technology transfer units or various types of incubators. However, the results ought to be improved. After dissection with stakeholders the issue seems to be on both sides – the expert and the beneficiaries of such expertise. The expert's side problem is based on unclear reimbursement options for time and knowledge necessary to accomplish the expertise, on the side of the beneficiary the unclear reimbursement of the expert causes fear about the final bill to be paid. A fear of losing the idea or opportunity they came up with (maybe the expert publishes it under their own name or sells the idea) or having to pay for it extensively (maybe the expert sues them for royalties or even overtake part of the company), causes reservations and discourages from sharing either good ideas or weaknesses of their enterprises.

A system with clear indication who benefits and how on both sides, who is an IP owner with the official IP theft preventing coordinator seems to be the best option to overcome the situation. On the side of the SMEs the ideal situation is where their ideas are protected, and they do not have to pay for the expertise. The platforms are already there, at this moment nothing institutionally has to be changed. The question remained how to reimburse the experts and HEI's which delegate them. Financial or otherwise.

HEIs delegating a worker gained not more than prestige. Government funded HEIs are financed according to their achievements, which are based on publications and points ascribed to those publications and points for commercialization of knowledge calculated on the pure financial basis – point per Polish Zloty. The calculation is much more complicated, but here it is enough to indicate, than more points mean more funds. So, the HEIs employees are encouraged to perform publication and commercialization activities, rather than being an expert. Nor there was a basis for financial reimbursement for the expert from the side of HEI. If the expert wanted a reimbursement, they would have to search on the SME. And this caused the reaction like fear described in the second paragraph. A tool for reimbursing the expert and HEI is needed.

A research and research and didactic employee of HEI must go every 2 years (or 5 years in case of professors) evaluation, where certain numbers of points are required to continue the employment. If the number of points is not sufficient then the employee may be let go instantly, after two incidents must be let go by law. The points were ascribed through publications only from the Ministry of Science and Higher Education (MoSaHE) and the competition and costs (sometimes 2 monthly salaries for one paper) are high. The same in commercialization. It is not a surprise, that HEI employees, who can be experts, first protect their jobs, especially in the uncertainty times like now.

A possible solution how to reimburse HEIs so they can reimburse the experts came from the recently introduced change in policy of evaluation of universities in Poland offering, a new point-generating factor based on HEIs influence on economy and society. So, if the expert influences economy and society – and the implemented expertise seems to be a good case of such influence - HEIs can get points, and consequently funding. Then it can reward its expert by financial incentives or the points for evaluation.

However, this is a general change which is not regulated in terms what are the proofs of such influence. Therefore universities, at least the one asked, did not introduce these criteria for awarding the employees. Hence, it is a good time to clarify this type of expert cooperation in terms of regulations and points for particular results. And above all determine who would be the issuer of such certificates and how they are presented. The idea is that the coordinator of cooperation would issue a standardized documents confirming the influence.

Provided successful, this could encourage HEIs to delegate their employees, employees who prefer to get their evaluation points in this way and SMEs offered a free and clear principles of the expertise understanding

gains of all parties involved.

Although, the approach is to be implemented in Lubelskie, potentially it is applicable for the whole Poland, and if successful, transferred to other EU regions. For this, it needs a fine tuning according to regional circumstances, particular in fields of knowledge and even in universities. Long term it is expected from the governmental bodies in Poland to provide clear regulations concerning evaluation of the universities, also based on their cooperation with industry not only on the purely financial ground, but also on the influence of the university on economy and society.

The proposed solution does not involve any cost on the side of the university or the SMEs', only on the organizational side, but demands cooperation of the state and university authorities. The time of adaptation is mostly related to the agility of the universities involved in adaptation of new regulations concerning their employees. The exporter is cooperating with one university, so Lubelskie's adaptation can be considered successful if the cooperation works even with one university.

Part I – General information

Project: *Supporting concentration and robustness of SMEs within the renewed EU industrial policy*. SCALE UP

Partner organization: Lubelskie Voivodeship

Other partner organizations involved (if relevant): Regional Management Northern Hesse GmbH

Country: Poland

NUTS2 region: Lubelskie

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Part II – Policy context

The Action Plan aims to impact:

- Action 3.6 “Economic marketing” financed by Lubelskie Regional Operational Programme 2014 – 2020.

Name of the policy instrument addressed:

- Lubelskie Regional Operational Programme (LROP) for 2014-2020.

Explanation:

Lubelskie Regional Operational Programme (LROP) Priority Axis 3 of the Programme is dedicated to implementation of Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisations (RIS3) for the Lubelskie Voivodeship 2020 and its specific objectives. Within the Axis 3 there is Action 3.6 “Economic marketing” financing a project by the same name – “Economic marketing”. The solution will be tested on “Technological Pilot” programme, which is an action of “Economic Marketing” project. SCALE UP solution will be utilized within this action. The program and project are planned to be continued in the years 2021-2027. The subject of AP is therefore an attempt to modify this tool by introducing a new functionality, in the form of a Technological Pilot (TP). Although tested on TP, provided successful, can be applied to any project involving cooperation between SME, SME’s support institution, HEI, an expert employed in HEI.

Part III – Details of the actions envisaged

ACTION 1

1. The background

The imported practice is the MoWiN Innovation Lab operated by the Regional Management Northern Hesse GmbH. The MoWiN Innovation Lab is one of the best practices offered by the Regional Management Northern Hesse GmbH. This practice is a part of SCALE UP programme, in particular of the interregional exchange of experience. It has been an example of working cooperation between the specialists from HEI and SME’s representatives facilitated by a hosting body, like in this case – the MoWiN Innovation Lab. The MoWiN facilitates meetings between SME’s representatives with some ideas to be implemented but without concrete plan and evaluation and experts. The experts are mainly employees of a local university. There are two types of sessions, one of them concerns technical aspects of the SME’s project, however the second one covers other aspects, like how to get financing, how to construct a business plan, is the project viable business wise, how to conduct an elevator speech to potential investors, how to marketize the product and so on. The sessions are organized several times a year and last one day each. The MoWiN BP owner has presented how does it work in practice and some of the beneficiaries depicted their success stores. The success stories were encouraging enough to import them to Lubelskie.

After considering the MoWiN as a practice to be imported, a question of reproducing the stories in Lubelskie arisen. The findings confirmed applicability: there are HEIs in Lubelskie and potential hosting institutions, as well as many SMEs in need of expertise. Although there were attempts to facilitate assistance for SMEs, but they are not spectacular. After detailed comparison it came to attention, that an interest of HEIs in Hessen and their experts is more extensive, even though they gained no direct or indirect financial profits from participation. Further investigation of the Lubelskie situation revealed, that HEIs and their employees work in different circumstances, have different expectations, so an innovative approach was necessary. Also, one day session composed of variety of workshops covering all the necessary topics, not only the technical ones, seem to the best solution and became an inspiration for organizing a similar practice in Lubelskie. Another inspiration was a description, how much of work done by whom is necessary to prepare such meeting directing us to the division of labor in such enterprises. So, the whole work was done by the MoWiN organizers, so we knew, that placing all responsibility in one organization results with much more efficiency. To summarize we have learned from the MoWiN that support for SMEs in the form of the expert advise must be: 1) with close cooperation to universities as the best source of experts; 2) should be organized in a form of one day meeting with all the areas of expertise covered; 3) organization of the event should be in the hands of organization, as it results with better efficiency.

Next, the question of importing of BP to Lubelskie appeared. We need a place, an organizer, experts and HEI’s. Several elements already are there, however there are no success stories like in the case of MoWiN.

As a representative of a business-science cooperation to test the MoWiN solution, we have selected an action modifying support for entrepreneurs of the economic marketing - “Technological Pilot” (TP). TP is organized by the Lubelskie Voivodeship as a part of the Regional Operational Plan of the Lublin Voivodeship 2014 – 2020 (RPO WL) – action 3.6

“Economic Marketing”. It is a part of the next edition of the Economic Marketing project aiming at supporting the technology and knowledge transfer. TP also works in the ecosystem of services for entrepreneurs – Biznes Lubelskie, which offers a variety of support. This ecosystem allows utilizing a palette of services for entrepreneurs to satisfy their needs for the support in one place and tailored to their needs, as well as facilities to conduct the meetings

TP, as an element of this ecosystem, aims at providing of support to, among the others, SMEs by involving experts to assist SMEs in increasing their competitiveness in various aspects and solving the problems.

In practice, it is planned to use TP to conduct similar activities as in the MoWiN. It already encompasses several components, like organizational workforce to prepare the meeting, to distribute information among SMEs in need of expertise, to organize a place for meeting. Despite of what it already has to offer, this multidimensional approach to SMEs support in TP will be improved by the MoWiN best practice, where experts are involved not only at the technological level, but also in economical, legal, IP protection etc. Further, the MoWiN’s form of workshops spanning all the areas of expertise in one place and in one day has proven to be working and efficient solution to draw upon and will be imported.

Conversation with the MoWiN representatives, during which, we have followed every step of the MoWiN procedures, allowed to localize the problem in Lubelskie and an obvious difference between MoWiN situation and the Lubelskie one - a barrier had been identified while recruiting the experts in Lubelskie. We have determined, that contrary to Northern’s experts, who participate in the expertise without any reimbursement expectations and the university encouraging it, Lubelskie’s (and the whole Poland as well) experts need to be encouraged to participate in the process. In short, they do not want to contribute for free and the HEIs are not interested in this either. The obvious solution would be a financial incentive, however due to uncertainty of financing, it does not seem like a viable, long-term option. Even if the financing is secured, a tenure procedure related to spending governmental money makes the process very unresponsive. Besides, the other side – entrepreneurs – need to have a clear understanding what are the experts’ gains to feel safe asking for assistance. Uncertainty concerning the mode of expert reimbursement raise a question, whether one or the other way the bill is to be paid by those, who asked for assistance. The reason for this attitude has been described in the “Introduction” part of this document.

Without experts this program would not be implemented. Here the MoWiN based, but original solution tailored to local circumstances was developed. Due to regulation changes HEIs will get points for participation of their employees in expert panels in our case. Then they can either reimburse the employees financially – from the governmental subsidiary increase caused by the rise in points, or by providing them with evaluation points for that as an alternative for publication. What is the most important for Lubelskie it does not create any additional cost necessary for engaging the experts. A clear understanding for entrepreneurs how the experts are reimbursed, constitute a simple solution to the aforementioned problems. The described in the Introduction change of the education law allows acquiring evaluation points for the influence on economy and society by the university. Being an expert and assisting SMEs constitutes an influence of both society and economy. Yet now a bridge needs to be built between the benefits of HEIs and its employees, our potential experts. Building this bridge shall solve a significant problem by today’s similar business support projects, namely recruitment of expert without finances involved. Once achieved it seems like a win-win solution, where all parties are benefiting. A cashless character also allows acceleration and agility of all the procedures since no tenures and related efforts and delays are involved. Utilizing MoWiN BP ideas, the Lubelskie business support environments, and addressing the main bottleneck issues by tailoring solution to local situation and policies seems like the best candidate for the Scale Up Lubelskie’s action. MoWiN provided the mode of operation, the possible source of experts, the labor and responsibility division and local requirements, while the local contribution and modification is to solve the issue of missing experts utilizing local policies.

2. Action

Lubelskie is inspired by the MoWiN BP, but its main action is not directly taken from it. Close cooperation with the MoWiN allowed to localize problems in Lubelskie’s similar projects, but without a success that MoWiN had. There are some elements to be imported to the existing framework, like in this case “Technological Pilot”, like the mode of organization of event as one-day, multitopic workshops, where the SME’s beneficiaries can get an expert advice on technical and other, like financing or IP, aspects. Also, organization of the meetings itself will be in hands of one body – like in case of the MoWiN. But those elements can only be implemented, while the main problem is solved. Solving the problem is the action of this action plan. It is sine qua non condition and the most important action is to solve - the one with recruiting experts for such activities as Technological pilot. HEI’s must agree to accept solution, where they delegate and reimburse their employees as an expert to the MoWiN- like programs, in Lubelskie’s case – Technological Pilot. To do so Lubelskie is to distribute the information about the project among stakeholders. It is to contact the HEIs’ rectors, inviting them to participation in the project and asking to include its employee’s expertise into the employee evaluation

process. Internal stakeholders, like the representatives of “Technological Pilot” and “Biznes Lubelskie” are to be engaged. Next there is a time for consultation by the designated representatives of the parties and creating necessary documents. A draft letter of the intent is to be offered for consultations. The Letter is to be consulted and feedback analyzed and considered constituting the final version of the Letter. Next signing an MOU with participating universities, and Lubelskie shall take place. The signed Letter is to be incorporated to “Technological Pilot” as its tool. Consequently, the new functionality of the “Technological Pilot” is to be tested. To do so information must be delivered especially to SMEs and HEI’s expert. Due to financial constrains the first phase of dispersing information will be based on the HEIs’ internal information distribution, Lubelskie Voivodship, especially “Technological Pilot” and “Biznes Lubelskie” mailing lists and other institutions willing to share the information. Due to incoming HEI and its employees incoming evaluation it is expected, that if our action is implemented swiftly enough, both the HEIs and experts from HEIs facing evaluation will be strongly motivated to participate in the actions undertaken in the Regional Operational Plan of Lublin Voivodship (RPO WL) – action 3.6 “Economic Marketing”. This evaluation means for HEI an increase or decrease of financial support from the government. On this basis HEI can reward a contributing employee, financially and otherwise, who has contributed to the level of evaluation. Moreover, scientific stuff goes through 2 (5 for a professor) -year cycle evaluation, where so far only publications and commercialization are recognized. Considering the cost and difficulty of an interest of scientists from HEIs may rest in our solution. This shall allow to increase the number and the scope of the expertise’s offer removing a bottleneck observed in an expert based projects conducted so far while recruiting experts with no financial reimbursement perspective and no gains for the delegating HEI other than just a PR support. Moreover, including an information about the mode of reimbursement for experts while inviting entrepreneurs in the need of assistance may drive away their hesitation in asking for assistance. This increase in motivation shall level up the numbers of experts for “Technological Pilot”, deficiency of which so far seems to be one of its key challenges. This expected result will be tracked together with the dissemination level of the information and program-related social awareness among entrepreneurs.

The activity is managed by the Lubelskie Voivodship.

3. Players involved

Lubelskie Voivodship (an organizer - especially “Technological Pilot” and “Biznes Lubelskie”), Lubelskie’s HEIs and their employees (service providers), “Technological Pilot” (an implementation and solution tester), Biznes Lubelskie (an organizer)

4. Timeframe

I. Preparatory stage

Deadlines: August 2021 – September 2021

- 1) Propagation of an information about the project and its aims among the stakeholders
- 2) Creation of a draft letter of intent

Milestone: a draft of letter of intent

II. Initiation stage

Deadlines: October 2021- December 2021

- 1) Consultation meeting with HEIs’ representatives and feedback
- 2) Creating the final version of the letter of intent
- 3) Official signing of the letter(s) of intent

Milestone: 5 signed letters of intent with HEI’s

III. Implementation stage

Deadlines: December 2021 – December 2022

- 1) implementation of letter of intent as a ‘Technological Pilot’ tool
- 2) testing the new functionality of ‘Technological Pilot’
- 3) Dissemination of the Technology Pilot as a tool to support entrepreneurs and the EDP process

Milestone: improved ‘Technological Pilot’ with the use of elements from MoWiN GP

IV. Monitoring stage

Deadlines: January 2022 – January 2023

- 1) tracking the success rate (implementation) of solutions developed as part of the 'Technological Pilot'
 - 2) tracking dissemination of information among entrepreneurs (social awareness)
- Milestone: evaluation report

5. Costs

This action involves a Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) policy regulations concerning evaluation and reimbursement (by them not BP importer) of their employees to encourage them to participate in expert panels. Organization and execution of the BP is directed to Technological Pilot, which has its own financing. The Action is to provide a solution to the expert deficiency problem, so its success involves acceptance of the solution and delegation of the employees by HEI's, what does not entail any cost for the BP imported.

6. Funding sources

n/a

Date: 30.08.2021

Signature: _____

Stamp of the organization (if available): _____

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