



BROCHURE INTERREG RATIO

Synopsis document for the Action Plan themes and areas for policy focus: common points, achieved results during partner meetings, exchange of experiences, good practices.

Conclusions prior to the Action Plan. Inputs from Ratio 'partners.

REGIONAL ACTION PLANS



In the current European context, SMEs that are in rural areas have serious difficulties to survive. That's why innovation capacity is key to promote regional economic development and to fight against rural exodus.

RATIO aims to identify the innovative potential of these companies, help them to grow and expand their activities through a learning process to implement and manage innovation.

With that aim, each partner defines different Action Plans which are summarized as follows:

Regional Action Plans

PARTNER 1 AND 5 (ARAGÓN REGION)



A deep study related to the characteristics of the territory, the rural SMEs and the regional policies has been performed to design the Action Plan. After a survey to 36 rural SMEs to know their characteristics and the difficulties they find to innovate, partners have found that the main barriers to innovate are the lack of trained personnel, lack of funds inside and outside the company. On the other way, main facilitators are a high trained human capital, access to external funds and an innovative culture and tradition.

With that information, our Action plan covers four main axes divided into different actions:

TALENT	FINANCING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adapt the Professional Training offer to the companies' necessities, ▪ Encourage Employee Workshops and Training with recruitment commitment which allow the insertion of young people to the job market, ▪ Training for active people, work supply development and ▪ Help to generate talent ecosystems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Training for companies and investors on accessing to financing, ▪ Knowledge of new sources of financing and access to new funding sources. <p>It is necessary to familiarized companies with different ways of funding, to train them to negotiate with investors properly and generate investors clubs.</p>
STRATEGIC BUSINESS MANAGEMENT	ENTREPRENEURSHIP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promote and reinforce the cooperation between SMEs and technological centers. ▪ Develop mechanisms that promote internationalization. ▪ Develop mechanisms to support the companies in the generation replacement challenge. ▪ Boost companies' growth through mechanisms that help them to increase their productivity and innovation, together with the internationalization. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Creation of business incubators and business accelerators which contribute to the company in terms of innovation, business view and talent and intra-entrepreneurship.

PARTNER 2



Action Plan for: Operational Programme and the Innovation Strategy of the Free State of Saxony 2014 – 2020

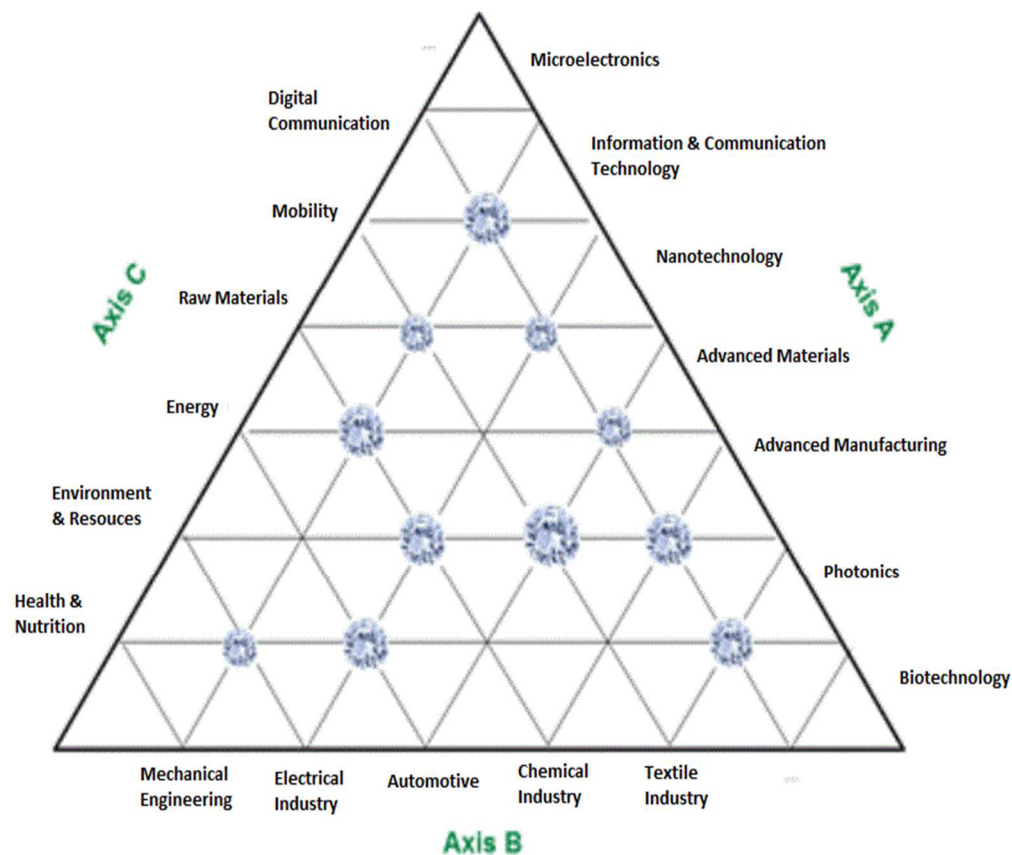
Summary: Innovations play a key role for Economic success and competitiveness. Saxony has been assessed as Strong Innovator in the European Innovation Scoreboard 2017 and so the goal of action should be to become an Innovation Leader in the future. The economic structure of Saxony has fundamentally changed after the German reunification in 1990 and today SMEs are the backbone of the economy. In 2014 nearly 110.000 SMEs were active at the market which means 99,9% of the total number of companies in Saxony and 93% of all companies in Saxony continuously doing R&D are SMEs (Source: Mittelstandsbericht 2013/2014 des SMWA).

The Operational Programme (funding priority: Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs) and the Innovations Strategy incl. smart specialisation contain many activities directly targeting the improvement of the innovation potential of SMEs.

Smart specialisation triangle:

Axis A reflects the Key Enabling Technologies with the technologies where Saxony is particular strong developed in. Axis B reflects the traditional developed sectors of the Free State of Saxony and Axis C reflects the fields with the main potential for growth in the future.

Brochure RATIO. Phase 1 March 2018



The highest innovation potential is seen in the intersections between the 3 Axes and in these fields, research should be fostered. The blurring boundaries between the economic sectors is even caused by digitalisation.

The profound and rapid changes caused by digitalisation have deep impact on Saxony's economy and here it is esp. a challenge for SMEs with limited amount of free capacities (personally, financially, IT-resources).

Recommendations given:

Deployment of advanced broadband internet access in whole Saxony without own contributions of small cities and communities

Set up of appropriate funding programs for SMEs with limited administrative burdens and fast processing times

Encourage alternative funding opportunities for SMEs (Venture Capital, Crowd-funding, Crow-investment...) and support new Startup culture

Raise interest of young people for natural science, engineering and traditional craftsmanship

PARTNER 3



The Action Plan for the Usti Region was set up during the phase 1 of the project RATIO based on the knowledge of the support of innovation activities for SMEs acquired in the cooperating regions of the EU, based on identifying the current state of the existing development documents of the Usti Region and Czech Republic and based on the results of discussions in the group of stakeholders of the RATIO project, interested in developing the business sphere of the Usti Region.

The result of the Interreg Europe project with the abbreviated name RATIO, implemented in the Usti Region, is the action plan, which is a proposal and a plan for the use of selected foreign practice which has proved its worth in the Lazio region of Italy and was considered the most suitable for enlargement into the Usti Region. The title of this best practice is "Creativity applied to innovation through increased capacity of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)". Its essence is the training of SMEs in the field of creativity.

When discussing the content of the various best practices provided in the RATIO project in the stakeholder group, it was also found that the Creative Voucher Brno project was successfully implemented in the Czech Republic (<https://www.jic.cz/kreativni-voucher/>). The project implementer is the South Moravian Innovation Center (JIC), an interest-bearing association of legal entities (South Moravian Region, Statutory City of Brno, Masaryk University, Brno University of Technology, Mendel University and Veterinary and Pharmaceutical University Brno).

Since both the above-mentioned good practices are thematic and the support of SME creativity has not yet been introduced in the Usti Region, it has been decided to use both best practices in a combination of them. The result is a variation that includes educational activities for SME employees and a program of creative vouchers for SMEs. The aim of the new pilot project "Supporting Creativity of SMEs in the Usti Region" was created.

The way of implementation of the RATIO Action Plan, drawing on the experience of other regions and containing the project "Support of Creativity of SMEs in the Usti Region", is based on the real possibilities the Programme for Development of the Usti Region 2014-2020 (PRUK 2014-2020) allows.

Implementation of the project is based on the following assumptions:

Brochure RATIO. Phase 1 March 2018

- the output of the RATIO project will be classified by the competent authority of the Usti Region as a plan to update the PRUK Action Plan 2014-2020;
- the output of the RATIO project will become a pilot project in 2018 as a project intent of regional significance and will be part of the update of the PRUK Action Plan 2014-2020;
- Action plan PRUK 2014 – 2020, output for the year 2019 will be completed by the designed pilot project "Supporting Creativity of SMEs in the Usti Region".

Implementation - preliminary schedule:

Action	term
Approval of the project output in the RATIO project form "Supporting creativity of SMEs in the Usti Region" in the RATIO "stakeholder group"	March 2018
Presentation of the project "Supporting creativity of SMEs in the Usti Region" as a part of the update PRUK Action Plan 2014 - 2020 to the Usti Region	March 2018
Negotiations on details and necessary adaptations of the project with the Usti Region	April – June 2018
Discussion and approval of the project in the bodies of the Usti Region	September – October 2018
Implementation of the project "Supporting creativity of SMEs in the Usti Region" within PRUK	January – December 2019

Brochure RATIO. Phase 1 March 2018



Work is under way on the Malopolska Action Plan for the development of innovation in rural areas!

The key priorities for activities at the regional level, aimed at the development of entrepreneurship, and as a consequence - of innovation, are:

- Strengthening the competence of human capital.
- Improving access to knowledge and tools for the development of innovation.
- Incubation and development of innovative projects.
- Development of technical infrastructure for entrepreneurship and innovation.

Malopolska Action Plan will be based on these priorities, although - as emphasized during the meeting of the Malopolska Boards of Stakeholders of the RATIO project on February 8, 2018 - a set of recommendations for local governments who can and should actively participate in creating and developing an innovation ecosystem, will also be an important part of the plan. This is a big challenge, especially for towns located far from major urban centers, mainly from Krakow as an urban center of Małopolska. Therefore, in the discussion conducted during the works on the action plan, the key is to search for instruments and determine the directions of activities that can contribute to the use of rural potentials - in the context of their residents, heritage and resources that can be a platform for cooperation - as well as creation and development of new products or services.

The process of implementation of activities at the regional level is an exceptionally big challenge, mainly in the context of the conclusions gathered during the 20 local workshops in the Malopolska rural areas, as well as the previous works of the Malopolska Board of Stakeholders and expert analyzes.

Meetings of international partners and exchange of experiences between our regions confirm that this won't be a simple task - innovations are just as needed in the rural areas as in the urban centers. However, cities and rural areas differ in access barriers to knowledge and tools/instruments needed for the development of innovation; also, different resources and potentials can be found. Awareness of differences between rural areas and cities is a key way to analyze and implement proposed solutions, especially in the context of possible support under the Regional Operational Program.

PARTNER 6



For the promotion of innovations of SMEs

in Vidzeme Planning Region

The action plan is developed ***with the goal to initiate and to implement such measures the introduction of which:***

- 1) ***would improve the implementation instruments of Latvian regional policies*** – action programmes for the support of innovations of small and medium-sized enterprises in rural regions,
- 2) ***would improve the measures of the specific support objective 1.2. of the Operational Programme "Growth and Employment",***
- 3) ***would create preconditions for developing the innovation environment,*** using other available resources for this goal.

The recommendations and actions included in the plan are based on the results of thematic work group discussions organised within RATIO project, the good foreign practices acquired, as well as on the conclusions of study "Development of innovative small and medium-sized enterprises in Latvia and Vidzeme region" implemented within the RATIO project.

During the development of the action plan work groups were organised, in which directors and development experts of Vidzeme Planning Region, entrepreneurs, representatives of state institutions (ME, LIAA, MW, SEA, RSS), business support organisations (ALTUM, BI, LLKIC), representatives of non-governmental organisations (LIKTA, LETERA, MASOC, Association of Light Industry Companies) and professionals of research institutions (ViA, RTU, LLU, IES) took part. The suggestions provided by the participants of these discussions are included in the range of measures to be implemented.

The action ***plan includes the priority lines of action and activities or measures that are implemented or initiated by the Administration of Vidzeme Planning Region (hereinafter referred to as VPR).*** VPR Administration implements these activities and measures independently or in cooperation with national and VPR local government

Brochure RATIO. Phase 1 March 2018

authorities, education and research, business support institutions, merchants, non-governmental organizations and other interested parties.

The action plan ***also includes the most important recommendations of advisory character***. Initiator for implementing them may be VPR Administration, as well as any other institution of state, regional or local level. Expanded outline of recommendations is included in the study “Development of innovative small and medium-sized enterprises in Latvia and Vidzeme region” implemented within the RATIO project.

The priority actions included in the plan are focused on policies and the improvement of their implementation instruments (especially the improvement of specific support objective 1.2.1 instrument), improving environment of innovations (activities of advisory support structures and improvement and development of infrastructure provision and accessibility), activation and motivation of SMEs for collaboration with the representatives of the research sector for the creation of new innovations and for their implementation in the activity of enterprises, as well as for the development of products and processes.

The following detailed information is provided for each priority action:

1. Substantiation (or problems stated and suggestions summarized within the RATIO project, which serve as arguments) for choosing the particular priority action.
2. Specific activities to be implemented.
3. The involved parties or institutions that are involved and/or should be involved in the implementation of priority actions, as well as the role of these organizations.
4. Time frame, in which the identified priority actions should be implemented.
5. Costs/investments or the necessary financial resources for the implementation of the identified priority actions.
6. Financial sources or available programs, instruments that help to implement the priority actions within the provided time frame.

It is planned to implement the priority actions included in the plan within the time period of five years, i.e. until year 2022 (including).

Control (monitoring) plan of the action plan implementation with control indicators are an integral part thereof.

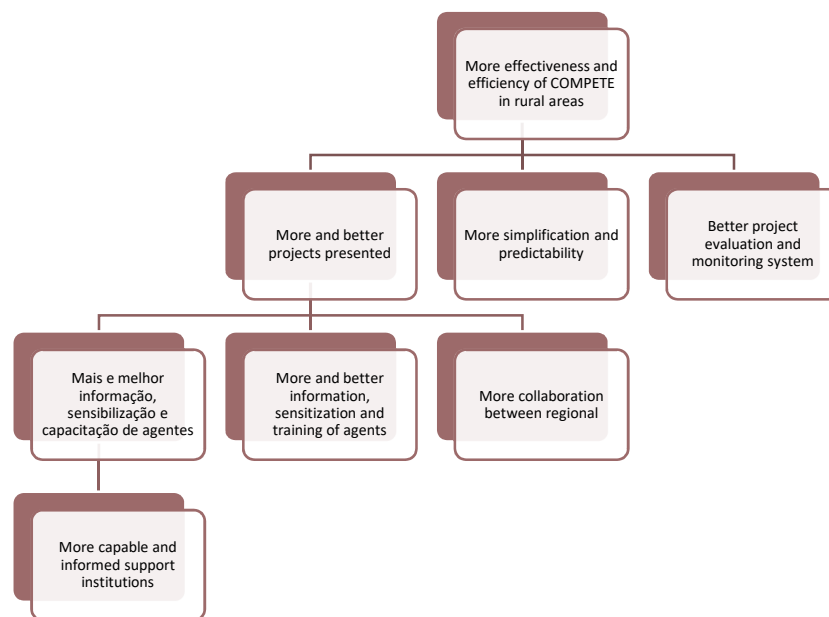
The action plan has been coordinated at RATIO project work group meeting.

Action plan and its control (monitoring) plan has been **approved by Vidzeme Development Council**.

PARTNER 7



The Action Plan prepared by the Municipality of Vila Pouca de Aguiar presents several actions to be developed during the next 24 months, based on the following question: How can the Program COMPETE encourage more and better innovation in companies in rural areas? Having as base the process of collecting and evaluating information, it was defined objectives to be achieved, organized by the following way:



Based on the work carried out during the development of the RATIO Project, it was defined a series of possible actions:

- Conducting studies / analyzes / evaluations to elaborate more concrete, in-depth and well-founded recommendations to COMPETE 2020, with the objective of identifying opportunities and triggering innovative activities, projects and relationships for the territory. This action is also intended to identify opportunities to improvement and present concrete and operational recommendations, as well as identify good practices that can be incorporated in COMPETE 2020;

- Creation of a Roadmap for the implementation of new rules, tools and supports to be incorporated into COMPETE 2020 Program, including the provision of capacity-building actions for collaborators of regional innovation ecosystem entities (universities, municipalities, associations, etc.) on key themes of innovation, so that they can better understand the profile, needs and aspirations of the companies of the territory at this level. The Roadmap is intended to strengthen COMPETE 2020 more specifically the mechanisms to support co-creation, co-operation and collaboration among rural

Brochure **RATIO**. Phase 1 March 2018

innovation actors to strengthen the quadruple-helix innovation for these territories (Government, Academy, Business and Community);

- Pilot projects to test new measures and tools to be incorporated in COMPETE 2020, supporting innovative projects for the valorization of endogenous resources and creation and accreditation of "innovation brokers" (people trained to facilitate and intermediation of open innovation processes) for rural areas.

PARTNER 8



The action plan that the ANCI Lazio is developing, within the Ratio Project, is based on the identification of a series of critical issues of the Policy Instrument that has been identified during the project application phase.

Based on the experiences of the other partner countries of the Project, Anci Lazio has realized that during this planning phase, the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of innovation policy must be coordinated between responsible actors and not fragmented between local authorities and other decision-making bodies, without clearly defined flows of communication. In the other countries involved in the project activities, this phase of implementation of the ROP measures saw a greater and clear synergy between the Managing Authorities and the final beneficiaries of the Innovation measures that favoured a bureaucratic simplification of the procedures and a greater clarity of the objectives of calls for proposals which has made it easier to achieve the objectives of the development of innovation among the SMEs of the territories involved.

This is very important, because the support for innovation among SMEs should have two main characteristics: the clarity of the intervention objectives and the subsequent rapidity of application, to avoid the reduction of the effects of these measures and the related projects on the territory. Furthermore, the lack of coordination between the various players in the programming sector can make the individual calls not be able to calibrate the real innovative needs of the stakeholders of the territory and the related SMEs.

Therefore, on the basis of this comparison, the critical issues of the current Planning on which to work with this Action Plan proposal are mainly two: a reduction of the bureaucratic requirements required by the Lazio SMEs in order to access dedicated funding within the 2014 ERDF ROP on Innovation Theme, a reduction of both the waiting times for assessments and the provision of funds, an award for those projects that go to test the innovations financed by the Municipalities of Lazio Region.

The Action plan therefore wants to aim not to overturn the measure on Innovation linked to the Project, but to optimize the existing measures through a simplification of the existing procedures and speed up both the assessment time and the requests for SMEs on the theme Innovation. The resolution of this issue is increasingly stringent because, in a period of crisis, Lazio SMEs are seen to be sobered not only by the national bureaucracy that provides for a series of obligations but even by the community, which has the potential to produce additional burdens for the SMEs. The problem of excessive bureaucratisation even has another negative effect, which is that of delaying the start up or implementation of ERDF projects, which, in the case of innovation projects, risks jeopardizing all effects immediately.

The intention is to adopt significant and innovative solutions with a view to:

- to simplify some strategic contents in the definition of procedures (calls / notices / tenders);
- to reduce the time taken to acquire participation requests;

Brochure RATIO. Phase 1 March 2018

- to concentrate calls and issues regarding the needs of innovative companies, avoiding fragmentation and dispersing financial resources.

To this end it is necessary to guarantee:

- the easy on-line availability of forms;
- the administrative acquisition of documents and information by the administration;

the checking of veracity of the substitutive declarations of certification and of the notarial deed;

- the regulation of access to administrative documents and, in detail, the identification of the instruments of protection, in the case of a negative response from the administration;
- the role of assistance and information desks to the public;

The purpose of this activity is to reduce the number of administrative documents that each company had so far had to produce for the presentation of the candidature making it waste time to devote to the business activities.

The proposal within this Action Plan is to request from SMEs, a minimum number of administrative documents that can identify the project leader and if there are pending charges that make the application invalid.

The second action will be to simplify and concentrate the selection criteria of the innovation project proposals for the Lazio SMEs.

In detail, selection criteria should catalyse around:

Quality, elements of content of the proposal that allow to highlight the technical validity, indicating a score on the basis of the effects of innovation on the territory of the Lazio Region;

Potential Effectiveness: ability of the proposal to contribute to the achievement of innovative results;

Cost-effectiveness of the proposal: price quality ratio

Sustainability: consider a reward for all those that SME transfer the innovative results of their project proposals to the various local administrations that need them or request them.

This criterion of reward should serve to ensure that the innovative technologies and innovative results financed by the POR Lazio remain in the area instead of being exported by companies as an element of excellence.



Cork Chamber has been collaborating as the Irish project partner on the Interreg Europe RATIO.

In collaboration with our regional project stakeholder group, we have developed a set of recommendations to support and diversify the current operating environment. We grouped these recommendations into three main opportunity areas

- 1. Clusters and Collaboration,**
- 2. Human Capital and**
- 3. Access to Finance**

In brief, we believe there is a strong case for developing a strategic framework for clusters via a National Cluster Policy. We highlight the value-add of supported, collaborative business networks at local level and propose the increased emphasis on these, and their importance in connecting with more centralised networks. We also emphasise the opportunity of further developing the Enterprise Centre (ECentre) network offering, to increase their effectiveness in meeting the needs of SMEs.

A key point identified in the regional analysis was the capacity of rural based SMEs to attract and retain people with valuable skills. Discussions with stakeholders highlighted the importance for regional growth, innovation and competitiveness of policies and practices to help businesses attract, retain and develop a talented workforce. Currently, the LEO network offers considerable support for skills development, particularly in the area of business skills through training and mentoring. Other training supports are available through the Skillnets programme.

However, to complement these supports, it was concluded that ancillary actions are needed, for example targeted communications focused on the attractions of the rural areas in terms of quality of life. This, and the potential associated with developing HR focused training courses via the LEO network for SME's to improve recruitment, retention and incentivising of employees is included within the recommendations for consideration.

Finally, the issues associated with accessing alternative and emerging sources of finance for entrepreneurship were at the forefront, particularly on getting high potential start-

Brochure RATIO. Phase 1 March 2018

ups investor ready. With this we are proposing the development of training, advice and mentoring supports that prepare SMEs for private equity investment, with a particular focus on business pitching.

We believe that in collaboration with our regional stakeholders we have developed a set of practical recommendations that have the highest long-term value to the continued development and strengthening of an innovative and competitive SME culture.

Financial Resources

- Scale & risk
- Mismatch
- Clarity & information/knowledge
- Segmentation
- More responsive, flexible public funding sources - more accessible
- Promote alternative private sources
- Provide training
- Local centres/offices
- Provide information on all sources
- Creative vouchers
- Pre-application support - e.g. for H2020
- Co-operation and pilot action funding
- Concept or idea testing
- Cluster organizations as a platform for R&D project implementation
- Segmented and specifically targeted innovation support instruments.
- Specific vouchers for innovation projects based on endogenous resources.

Innovation ecosystem & culture

- Access to knowledge
- Lack of collaboration
- Building social capital
- Linkages
- Support professional innovation management and processes
- Mediators and brokers in innovation and research
- Orientation of knowledge institutions
- Innovation popularization - connect to better life
- Innovation health check tool - assess innovation at a regional level
- involving the community in innovation processes (with co-creation tools) – “problem solving approach”.
- Encourage the creation of multidisciplinary cooperatives.

Brochure RATIO. Phase 1 March 2018

Innovation Support Delivery

- Improved co-ordination and targetting
- Reduced fragmentation
- Reduced bureaucracy
- Develop in a horizontally and vertically coordinated way at both technical and political levels, e.g. include the Rural Development Programmes
- Cluster organization support project funding and implementation process
- Improve transparency in innovation services - upfront regarding costs, process etc.
- Improved consultation with stakeholder including the collection of information
- innovation support instruments for an early phase technology/solution testing

Brochure RATIO. Phase 1 March 2018

Qualified/Skilled Staff

- Skills strategy
- Creativity training
- Innovation programme at schools
- Quality of life
- Market oriented training
- Vocational or career consultancy
- Specific training for the staff of local public authorities on innovation and entrepreneurship
- Training & coaching for intrapreneurial teams

Infrastructure

Broadband

- Reduce local matching funding requirement (Saxony)

Market Access

