

**INNO INFRA
SHARE**
Interreg Europe



European Union
European Regional
Development Fund

Sharing Strategies for European Research and Innovation Infrastructure

(INNO INFRA SHARE)

ACTION PLAN FOR VIDZEME PLANNING REGION

Vidzeme Planning Region

December 2018 (With revisions made in April and May 2019)

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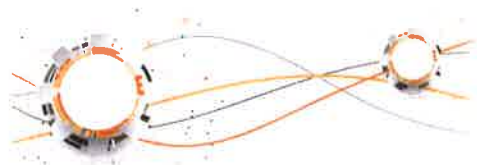
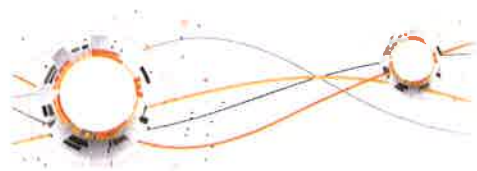


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1. GENERAL INFORMATION

1.1. Vidzeme planning region

Vidzeme Planning Region (VPR) is one of the five planning regions in Latvia (NUTS3), and it lies in the North East of Latvia and borders with Estonia in the North and Russia in the East. Region includes 25 local municipalities and one city of the republic significance – Valmiera. Vidzeme planning region administration is the entity responsible for regional planning and coordination, as well as cooperation between municipalities and different governmental institutions. VPR is the largest region in Latvia by area representing 23,6% of the total territory of Latvia. The population of Vidzeme (188 494) is 9,7% of the total country population with the lowest density (12,4 people per km²)¹.

Vidzeme is a predominantly rural region. More than 55% of the area of the region is covered by forest and 34% is agricultural land². Leading industries in the region are forestry and wood processing, agriculture and food processing, construction, materials production, trade, tourism and recreation, creative industries³. 18,7 thousand economically active units (including 5518 companies) employ 85,3 thousand people in the region⁴. 6,6% from the economically active persons in Vidzeme Planning Region are unemployed⁵. Unemployment rate varies significantly among municipalities with the lowest rate among municipalities in the core of the region.

GDP in Vidzeme region (latest data 2014) is 6,4 % of the whole Latvian GDP⁶. From national perspective, Vidzeme region creates highest input to national GDP in agriculture, forestry and fisheries. At the regional level the highest input is generated by the manufacturing, wholesale and retail trade and public administration sectors. Latvia as a NUTS2 region is among lowest performing countries in EU, based on Regional Competitiveness Index 2016⁷. Detailed information on NUTS3 level is not available, but the rating largely depicts situation in Vidzeme region as well.

Vidzeme region is well connected both on national and regional level and with the neighbouring countries (Estonia, Russia). Vidzeme has good connection with the capital city Riga where the largest number of RII organizations and industry are located. At the regional level good connectivity exist within the core of the region – the strategic triangle area involving Valmiera, Cēsis and Smiltene cities. Vidzeme region has also good connection with Tartu county in Estonia.

1.2. INNO INFRA SHARE project

The goal of Interreg Europe 2014-2020 Programme project Sharing Strategies for European Research and Innovation Infrastructures (INNO INFRA SHARE) is to improve the accessibility and the exploitation of local Research and Innovation

¹ Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia www.csb.gov.lv. Retrieved on July 10, 2018

² Ibid.

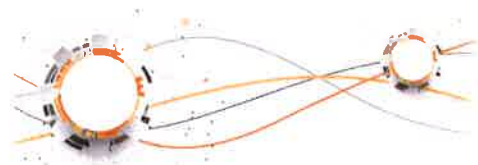
³ Vidzeme planning region Development program. Description of existing situation, 2015.

⁴ Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia www.csb.gov.lv. Data on economically active companies in statistical regions and on employment. Retrieved on July 10, 2018

⁵ Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia www.csb.gov.lv. Data on employment. Retrieved on July 10, 2018

⁶ Yearbook of Latvian statistics 2017

⁷ The EU Regional Competitiveness Index 2016.



infrastructure (RII) assets by SMEs. Project partnership covers 8 European regions from Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Latvia, Estonia, Czech Republic and Sweden⁸, all of them with common RIS3 smart specialization priorities. Project partners undertake a joint learning and collaboration process, involving regional and national stakeholders, that will contribute to the design and implementation of 8 regional Action Plans in their respective territories to improve policy instruments that will positively affect RIIs and improve their accessibility by SMEs. Project is implemented from 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2020.

Regional Action plans for each partner territory to improve policy instruments that will positively affect RII and improve their accessibility by SMEs are main project phase 1 outcomes. Project is implemented in two phases:

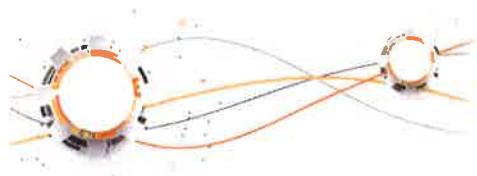
- i) Phase 1: the exchange of knowledge and experience between the regions and development of regional action plans, and
- ii) Phase 2: the monitoring and implementation of action plans.

The current document is the Action plan for Vidzeme planning region (VPR). The Action plan defines actions for supporting entrepreneurship and innovation in the region. The main goals of the VPR Action plan are to improve national and regional level policy instruments and initiate R&I ecosystem in the region with an aim to positively affect RIIs and improve their accessibility by SMEs. The Action plan is designed in joint learning and collaboration process involving regional and national stakeholders – regional RII owners and policy makers, representing Policy instrument Managing Authorities, that will later participate also in implementation and monitoring of the action plan. Identified actions are based on intensive process of context analysis, RII mapping and transfer of learning from other partners best practices. The Action plan implementation and monitoring will happen in the second phase of the project: 01.01.2019. – 31.12.2020.

2. POLICY CONTEXT

The Action Plan aims to impact:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Investment for Growth and Jobs programme <input type="checkbox"/> European Territorial Cooperation programme <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other regional development policy instrument
Name of the policy instrument addressed:	Operational programme "Growth and Employment 2014.-2020" Specific Objective (SO) 1.1.1. "Increase innovation and funding attraction capacity of Latvian scientific institutions, by investments in infrastructure and human resources" (MA – MoES) Specific Objective (SO) 1.2.1. "Private sector R&D investments" (MA – MoE) Vidzeme Planning Region Development programme 2020
Endorsement by MA	During the stakeholder meeting in Riga on 15.11.2018 with the Ministry of Education and Science and Ministry of Economy, both MAs endorsed the content of the Action plan, approved the AP for VPR by provided official supporting letters.

⁸ Project partners are Aster Stock Joint Consortium (Italy), Brainport development (Netherlands), Vidzeme planning region (Latvia), Tartu City Government (Estonia), Research center Flanders Make (Belgium), Skåne region (Sweden), Brno Technical University (Czech Republic) and Chemnitz Technical University (Germany).



2.1. Policy framework

Management of RIs and their accessibility by SMEs are subject of various policy planning documents and policy instruments at national and regional level. The Guidelines for Science, Technology Development and Innovation 2014-2020 and Guidelines for National Industrial Policy 2014-2020 are the main national level policy documents setting priorities, goals and measurement framework related to the innovations and research infrastructure. Political responsibility on these sectoral policies is split between Ministry of Education and Science (science and innovation policy) and Ministry of Economy (industrial policy).

Ministry of Education and Science carry out also the function of coordinating implementation of Latvian national RIS3 strategy for transformation of economy towards production of higher added value products and services. Government of Latvia has outlined and defined five smart specialization areas⁹. Vidzeme Planning region, in its development strategy 2030, has defined regional RIS3 specialization areas, that are corresponding to national RIS3 areas¹⁰.

The Latvian roadmap of European research infrastructure 2016-2020¹¹ specify participation of Latvian institutions in European research infrastructures. National research infrastructure roadmap in Latvia is not yet elaborated. Project implementation has partly contributed to this task by mapping available research infrastructure in Vidzeme region. Currently nation-wide overview of the existing RIs and their services can be obtained from online RII database UseScience created and maintained by Riga Technical University¹².

Vidzeme planning region Development program 2014-2020 is regional level planning document defining medium term priorities till 2020. Vidzeme planning region administration ensures regional planning, coordination of programme implementation and monitoring. VPR administration serve as intermediary between municipalities and different governmental institutions ensuring regional and local level representation in elaboration of entrepreneurship, employment and social policies.

All above mentioned policy documents will be in force till 2020. During the action plan implementation phase (2019-2020) these documents will be evaluated, and the next period documents will be elaborated.

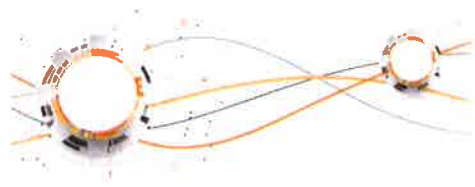
Main R&I problems in Latvia are related to the insufficient state budget financing for science in the long-term, low level of employment in science, research, technological development and innovation, and insufficient renewal of staff involved in these areas.

⁹ Smart energy; Advanced ICT; Knowledge intensive bio-economy; Biomedicine, medical technologies and biotechnology; Smart materials, technology and engineering.

¹⁰ Those are high value-added wood products, production of healthy food and drinks, biomass for chemical conversion and production of energy under the Knowledge intensive Bio-economy priority. Rehabilitation and health care under Biomedicine and medical technologies priority. Smart materials ICT, as well as few region-specific areas including Recreation and sustainable tourism, Creative industries and Distance professional services.

¹¹ <http://www.izm.gov.lv/lv/starptautiska-sadarbiba/eiropas-petniecibas-telpa>

¹² UseScience system <https://scientificservices.eu> contains laboratory equipment, ICT and specialist tools.



Financial investment in infrastructure is not balanced with investment in human resource development¹³.

EU Structural funds Operational programme “Growth and Employment 2014.-2020” is the main policy supporting instrument providing support for innovation and research infrastructure. Action plan is particularly focussing on improvement of the Specific objective 1.1.1. “Increase innovation and funding attraction capacity of Latvian scientific institutions, by investments in infrastructure and human resources” implemented by the Ministry of Education and Science. Under the SO 1.1.1. support is provided for industry-driven research grants (action 1.1.1.1.), grants for post-doc research in RIS3 areas (action 1.1.1.2.), student research and innovation grants for universities (action 1.1.1.3.), RII development and R&D institutions capacity building projects for universities (action 1.1.1.4.) and grants for collaboration projects in European research area (action 1.1.1.5.). Implementation of the SO 1.1.1. has commenced in 2017. By August 2018 60% of all funds are committed¹⁴. During the stakeholder meetings with Ministry of Education and Science and Ministry of Economics, it was concluded and recommended by both Managing authorities that Action plan should also additionally address SO 1.2.1. “Private sector R&D investments”.

2.2. Entrepreneurs and RII

Structure of Latvian national economy is mainly made up of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises that have limited capacity to invest in R&D¹⁵. High-tech enterprises are mostly concentrated in the capital city area.

The total number of companies in Vidzeme (2015) was 5518, with absolute majority being micro and small enterprises¹⁶. The ratio of companies per number of inhabitants in Vidzeme region is similar to other regions in Latvia, except capital city Riga and its metropolitan area. Largest and most significant company in Vidzeme by turnover, number of employees and global presence is Valmiera Glass group – one of the leading European manufacturers of glass fibre-based products. Other important larger players include retail chain owner, agriculture and machinery cooperative, several breweries, forestry, wood products, wood house and furniture manufacturers, milk product and niche food producers¹⁷. Main export goods are glass fibre products, wood-based products, agriculture and food processing products exported to other Baltic states (Lithuania and Estonia), Nordic countries, Germany, Poland, UK and Russia. In recent years growing number of start-ups in the ICT and creative industries areas have started to develop in region, mainly in Cēsis and Valmiera towns. Tourism and recreation industry are also represented in the region. The largest and most significant companies are concentrated in the strategic core of Vidzeme region – around the Valmiera city, Cēsis and Smiltene counties, where also the RII holders are located.

Largest regional companies are conducting their own R&D and are owners of their private RIIs. In general companies in the region do not provide access to their RIIs to other companies. Exceptions are companies involved in clusters. Smaller and medium

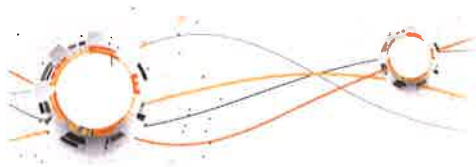
¹³ Progress report on the implementation of the Europe 2020 National Reform Program, 2018.

¹⁴ Based on data published by Central Financing and Contracting Agency www.cfca.gov.lv.

¹⁵ Progress report on the implementation of the Europe 2020 National Reform Program, 2018.

¹⁶ Yearbook of Latvian statistics 2017

¹⁷ Lursoft database www.lursoft.lv



sized innovative, export driven companies in food sector are involved in collaborative R&D within the Latvian high added value and healthy food cluster (based in region). This cluster involves also three out of four regional RII holders and currently is in the process of transition to food bioeconomy cluster. Several wood construction companies from the region are involved in the Latvian Wood Construction cluster and some regional companies are involved in CleanTech Latvia cluster (both clusters based in capital city Riga).

Overall national level tendency shows that interest of entrepreneurs in using the RII is still relatively small. Its potential growth is hampered by the lack of solvency of companies to use the services of a scientific institutions and the lack of awareness of the specifics of the work of scientific institutions. Companies cooperating with scientific institutions are mostly working in sectors of natural sciences and pharmacy. Research centres and scientific institutions mostly cooperate with other academic institutions¹⁸.

According to the Regional Innovation Scoreboard Index the whole Latvia as a NUTS2 Region is among moderate innovators in EU¹⁹. Detailed information on NUTS3 level for Vidzeme region is not available. Latvia is performing worst among Baltic states and is one of the worst performers in the 'Moderate innovators' category. Relative strengths for Latvia are related to non-R&D innovation expenditures and Venture capital investments. The worst relative performances comparing to the EU level are related to linkages & entrepreneurship, open, excellent research systems and innovators. Most positive trends since 2014 are related to venture capital investments, employment in fast growing enterprises of innovative sectors and tertiary education, but highest fluctuations are related to non-R&D innovation expenditure and firm investments.

Main R&I institutional problems in Latvia are related to insufficient cooperation and coordination between science, technology development and innovation institutions, higher education institutions, public administration and industry, underdeveloped international cooperation and R&D process resulting in low commercialization of inventions²⁰. Other problems are related to the availability of human resources and their insufficient renewal. The total number of people employed as researchers in Latvia (2016) is 7400, from those 1098 in private sector, while the rest is in the public sector (including higher education institutions). Half of them are more than 60 years old²¹.

The total research expenditure in Latvia was 110,4 mil. EUR in 2016. From it 52,7 mil. EUR or 48% are public financing, 23,7 mil. EUR or 22% – company financing, 3,2 mil. EUR (3%) financing by universities and 30,7 mil. EUR (28%) financing by foreign funds (EU funding mainly). R&D expenditure made only 0,44% of total GDP in 2016²². Implementation of SO 1.1.1. that has started in 2017 predictably will have positive influence on this ratio in few coming years.

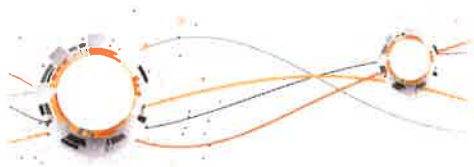
¹⁸ Study about the entrepreneurship and large-scale research infrastructure co-operation in the Baltic Sea region, Baltijas Konsultācijas, 2013. www.science-link.eu

¹⁹ Regional Innovation Scoreboard 2017

²⁰ Progress report on the implementation of the Europe 2020 National Reform Program, 2018.

²¹ Science in numbers, 2018. Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia www.csb.gov.lv.

²² Science in numbers, 2018. Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia www.csb.gov.lv.



2.3. R&I ecosystem in the region

Total majority of universities and scientific institutions holding RIIs in Latvia are located and concentrated in capital city Riga. Few single sited RIIs are located in two universities and two scientific institutions (institutes) in the Vidzeme planning region. The main RII holders in Vidzeme planning region are:

- Vidzeme University of Applied Science and institutes working within the university system²³,
- Riga Technical University Cēsis Affiliate²⁴,
- Institute for Environmental solutions (private research institution)²⁵,
- Institute of Agricultural resources and economics under the Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies²⁶.

Regional RIIs cover such main areas as:

- bio-economy,
- mechatronics,
- virtual and augmented reality,
- ICT, data security,
- RFID,
- multimedia,
- remote sensing,
- food technology,
- electronics,
- automatization and energy.

Modern technology infrastructure (in areas of food technology, forestry, wood processing, mechatronics, electronics, ICT, agriculture, engineering) is also available in several technical schools in the region: Valmiera Technical School, Cēsis vocational school, Priekuļi technical school and Smiltene technical school. This infrastructure is not considered as classical RII, but it has potential role in the regional R&I ecosystem as training and demonstration places for companies.

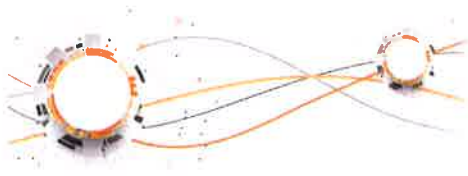
Despite relatively small scale and critical mass of regional RIIs in the Vidzeme region, there are good preconditions for establishment of regional R&I ecosystem in the Vidzeme planning region. Universities and scientific institutions in the region have already established close cooperation ties and are regularly cooperating on various joint projects and issues. Cooperation with regional municipalities and entrepreneurs

²³ These include the Sociotechnical Systems Engineering Institute and the Institute of Social, Economic and Humanities Research. University operates several fully equipped laboratories including virtual and augmented reality, computer network, mechatronics, electronics, RFID and other laboratories.

²⁴ RTU Cēsis Affiliate has a 3D printer onsite from the local municipality to use for educational purposes, as well as good connection to the main University with all its resources and laboratories.

²⁵ The Institute has remote-sensing ground penetrating radar, portable spectrometers, aerial surveillance and environmental monitoring system "ARSENAL" and research aircraft.

²⁶ The Institute has following RIIs: plant breeding, selection and genetics analysis laboratories, field crop breeding testing technologies, equipment for preparation of soil, sowing, harvesting, seed analysis, crop rotations.



is also established. Vidzeme Planning Region ensures the role of a broker and intermediary between regional players, national level and international partners. Vidzeme Planning Region is actively participating in various international projects and platforms and has established high quality networks with leading European RIS3 regions and organisations. Relatively small number of stakeholders in Vidzeme provide opportunities for faster decision making and efficient solutions, creating favourable preconditions for piloting consultative platform in the region and later multiplication of Vidzeme experience at national level.

2.4. Interregional learning and findings

During the first phase of the project Vidzeme Planning Region together with regional and national stakeholders (RII owners and representatives of the Policy instrument managing authorities) went through intensive learning process. Project partners identified best practice examples based on analysis of regional and national context and mapping of existing infrastructures. Partner regions demonstrated best practices in study visits and discussed them in detail during peer reviews with participation of Vidzeme regional stakeholders and national policy makers (MoES)²⁷. On basis of this learning process Vidzeme planning region together with regional stakeholders and external experts from N-Able²⁸ have identified the most interesting and relevant best practice examples that have the potential of transfer in Vidzeme situation and context:

1. Streamlining policy framework towards RII sharing mindset

Current policy documents and policy instruments are lacking clearly articulated actions targeted at RII sharing. In the discussions in stakeholder meetings and peer reviews it was concluded together with stakeholders that situation may be improved by streamlining RII sharing perspective into the implementation process. Policy makers are lacking coordinated and regular feedback on the quality of the policy implementation from the user perspective.

Good practices: Skåne Research and Innovation Council (FIRS) experience in coordinating implementation of regional innovation strategy and contributing to the quality of national policy instruments (for more details see box on page 16).

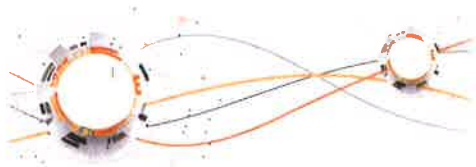
2. Strengthening collaboration between regional research and innovation actors

Research and innovation ecosystem in Latvia is fragmented and concentrated around the capital city. RII holders and users (entrepreneurs) cooperate inactively and in the existing cooperation between regional stakeholders is no R&I related narrative. R&I potential for development of the region is not recognized leading to lack of regional research and innovation ecosystem.

Good practices: Future Sax, Skåne Soundingboard 2.0, Brainport Development, Skåne Innovation week, Tartu Start-up days (for more details see box on page 19)

²⁷ In study visit in Emilia-Romana region participated representatives from the MoES, in study visit in North-Brabantia region participated representatives from the Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences and from the Institute for Environmental solutions, in peer review in Skåne Region participated representative from the MoES and in study visit in Skåne region participated representative from Riga Technical University Cēsis Affiliate.

²⁸ Dr. Pierre Padilla and Dr. Emmanuel Boudard from N-ABLE company.



3. Increasing skills and motivation of RII holders and users

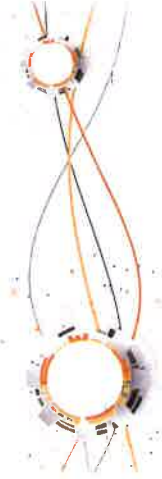
RII holders lack motivation for RII sharing, that stems from the existing institutional culture, insufficient entrepreneurial mindset among RII holders and lack of practical knowledge and examples how RII sharing may be organized. Vidzeme planning region and Tartu City stakeholders identified that both regions experience similar challenges.

Good practices: Future Sax experience in training, learning workshops and foresight exercises (for more details see box on page 21)

4. Increasing international cooperation

The existing project partnership has created a strong network of regions that are among the best in Europe in terms of research and innovation. This creates good potential for experience exchange and joint future cooperation activities.

Good practices: OpenLab model from Skåne Region (for more details see box on page 24).



2.5. SWOT

Strengths

- Existing policy framework comprise coherent framework for development of research and innovation at national level
- Structural funds provide support to various funding instruments that are targeted at building research and innovation capacity
- There are good examples of scientific institutes that work very actively with industry
- A nationwide database of scientific equipment and services UseScience is uniting most part of RII holders (universities and scientific institutes) in Latvia
- Vidzeme RII holders and other stakeholders have regular mutual cooperation ties
- Unique competence of INNO INFRA SHARE project partners

Opportunities

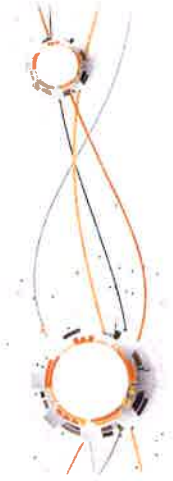
- Promotion of interaction among involved actors via regional R&I consultative platform may develop systematic relations that build up to a regional innovation ecosystem
- Due to recent legislation changes line ministries now can directly fund research and innovation in their respective areas
- Better targeted policy documents and instruments allowing support of RII sharing initiatives
- Living labs/Open labs as knowledge transfer and innovation driving tools
- Improved competence and knowledge of RII holders and their managers
- Strengthened research-industry links
- AP actions may have good multiplication potential at national level

Weaknesses

- Research and innovation funding continues to have low priority compared with other policy areas and is almost entirely depending upon structural funds
- Existing policy instruments currently does not provide targeted support for RII sharing initiatives
- RII infrastructure is fragmented due to highly fragmented structure of higher education and research institutions
- The Latvian industrial structure is mainly characterized by low-tech firms
- Companies generally spend little on research or innovation and lack significant technical staff that could undertake R&D
- Unsatisfactory cooperation between science and business sectors (lack of collaborative platforms)
- Limited entrepreneurial culture within the universities and scientific institutes
- RII holders lack motivation for RII sharing, that stems from the existing institutional culture and lack of practical knowledge
- Low level of internationalization in RII sharing

Threats

- High dependence on structural funds continues lessening the sustainability perspectives of R&I initiatives
- The structure of the Latvian economy does not facilitate research-industry links
- Threats to preserving people in the innovation system
- Coordination of research and innovation issues across government remains limited in the structural funds planning process narrative
- RII holders reluctant to change institutional culture and become more entrepreneurship oriented



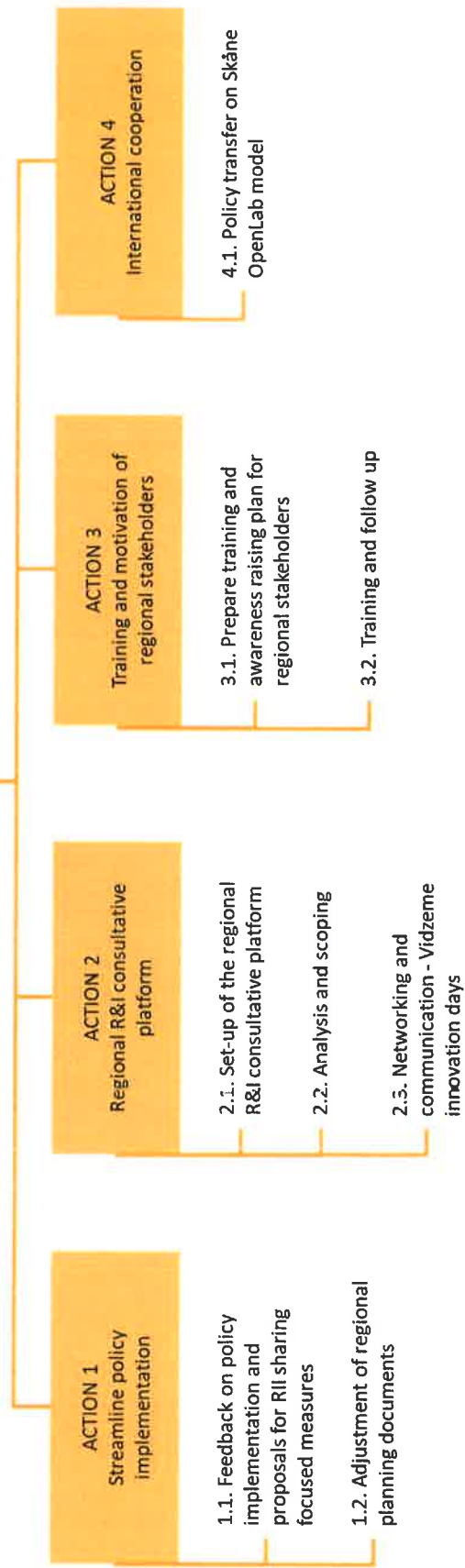
2.6. PLAN IN A GLANCE

Overall objective

To improve the accessibility and the exploitation of local Research and Innovation infrastructure (RII) assets by SMEs in Vidzeme planning region

Immediate objective

Initiation of R&I ecosystem in the Vidzeme planning region

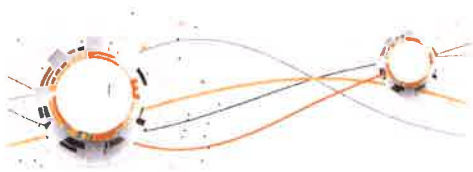


Partners' best practice
Skåne Research and Innovation Council (FIRS)

Skåne Soundboard 2.0
FutureSax
Brainport Development
Skåne Innovation week
Tartu Start-up days

FutureSax

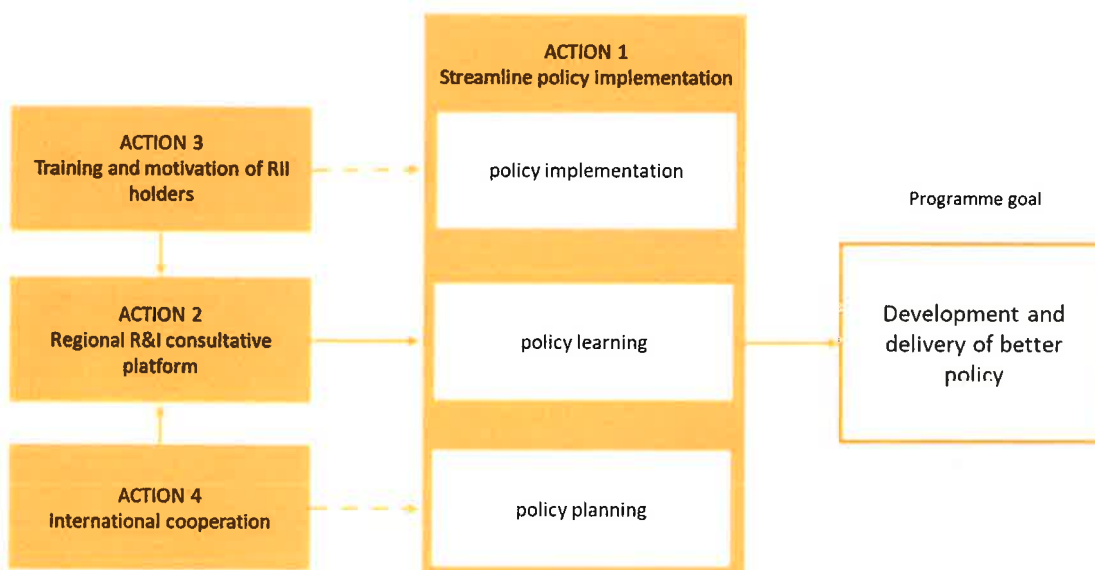
OpenLab Skåne

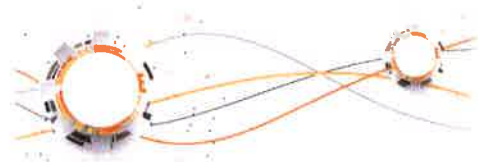


2.7. INTERNAL COHERENCE AND CONTRIBUTION TO PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES

INTERREG Europe programme aims at development and delivery of better policy. Actions of the Vidzeme Planning Region have strong internal coherence and orientation towards this objective.

Action plan is organized around the Action 1 “Streamline policy implementation” and its three main dimensions: policy implementation, policy learning and policy planning. Action 2 “Regional R&I consultative platform” is serving as the central instrument for uniting regional stakeholders, coordinating their activities and providing targeted input on various policy dimensions. Regional platform is instrumental for providing feedback on improvement of implementation of existing policy instruments and on coordinated learning from the existing policy implementation. Action 3 “Training and motivation of RII holders” directly contributes on building capacity of regional stakeholders thus providing input for improvement of programme implementation quality. Action 4 “International cooperation” is oriented towards building motivation of regional stakeholders for internationalization initiatives and provides input for planning of better targeted RII sharing measures.





3. DETAILS OF THE ACTIONS ENVISAGED

3.1. ACTION 1 Streamline policy implementation

Goal

To streamline policy framework towards RII sharing mindset

Rationale

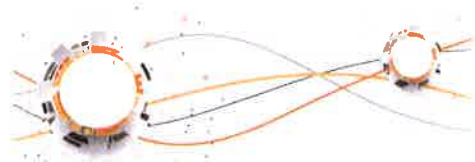
The most important RII related problems highlighted in the main national level policy documents in the research and innovation area²⁹ are the underdeveloped state of existing RIIs and the technology transfer infrastructure, fragmented structure of RIIs, fragmented financial instruments available for research and innovation processes and necessity on establishing new RIIs. Policy documents tackle RII sharing entirely from the efficiency perspective as one of the means to reduce the fragmentation of scientific institutions and their resources. Wider accessibility of RII to entrepreneurs is one of the many tasks set by the Guidelines for Science, Technology Development and Innovation. According to the Guidelines this task shall be achieved by improvement of governance of scientific institutions (RII holders) not specifying measures how wider accessibility of RII may be achieved.

Lack of clear focus on RII sharing in the policy documents is reflected also at the level of the policy instruments. The relevant policy instrument³⁰ currently does not provide targeted support for RII sharing initiatives. Under the current SO 1.1.1. RII sharing is promoted indirectly as one of the side effects of industry-driven research (measure 1.1.1.1.) and post-doc support (measure 1.1.1.2.). Under the measure 1.1.1.4. "RII development and R&D institutions capacity building" project applicants (higher education and scientific institutions) are required to provide information on existing procedures in RII sharing as part of their strategies, but no specific guidance on that matter is provided. To improve policies, policy makers are lacking constructive and qualitative feedback from scientific institutions and entrepreneurs.

Experience of INNO INFRA SHARE partners from Skåne region – the role and structure of FIRS showcased during the peer review and study visit in Skåne region, shows how regular structured feedback from regional stakeholders to the national level policy makers may contribute to the better quality of national policy and improved implementation of policies. During 2019-2020 the Ministry of Education and Science, as well as Ministry of Economy will evaluate research and innovation related policy instrument measures. Using Skåne region example, during this process there will be opportunity for Vidzeme planning region and regional stakeholders to provide practical feedback on implementation modalities of existing policy instruments and proposals for more targeted measures based on international best practice learned during the project implementation. Other interventions include facilitation of RII sharing mindset by channelling information between policy instruments and stakeholders. MAs of R&I

²⁹ The Guidelines for Science, Technology Development and Innovation 2014-2020 and the Guidelines for National Industrial Policy 2014-2020.

³⁰ Operational programme "Growth and Employment 2014.-2020" Specific Objective 1.1.1. "Increase innovation and funding attraction capacity of Latvian scientific institutions, by investments in infrastructure and human resources"



related measures have expressed their interest and willingness to receive constructive feedback that would allow to improve the quality of OP implementation.

Vidzeme planning region Development program 2014-2020 under the long-term priority "Sustainable business and innovation" and medium-term priority "Thematic networks and knowledge transfer" highlight necessity for improvement of governance of business and innovation issues in the region as well as improvement of cooperation and knowledge transfer between entrepreneurs, educational and research institutions in the region. Actions and measures shall be adjusted by actions targeted at establishment of regional innovation ecosystem. Here again we are inspired by Skåne region example, discussed in the Skåne peer review meeting and study visit, on setting effective and efficient governance structure for implementation of regional innovation strategy.

Actions

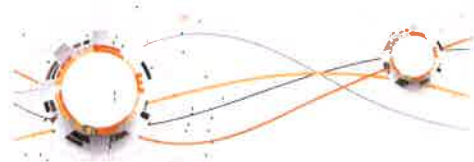
- 1.1. Feedback on policy implementation and proposals for RII sharing focused measures
 - 1.1.1. Vidzeme planning region administration in collaboration with regional stakeholders participate in evaluation of existing policies and policy instruments (SO 1.1.1, SO 1.2.1).
 - 1.1.2. Vidzeme planning region administration in collaboration with regional stakeholders provide feedback on implementation of current policy instruments (SO 1.1.1. and SO 1.2.1.) measures, elaborate proposals for better focused interventions and organize discussions and meetings with the Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Economy and the regional stakeholders.
- 1.2. Adjustment of regional planning documents with R&I measures
 - 1.2.1. Vidzeme Planning Region administration prepares amendments in the Vidzeme planning region Development programme 2014-2020 by adding action on establishment of regional R&I consultative platform.
 - 1.2.2. Vidzeme Planning Region Development Council approves proposed amendments.

Players involved

Responsible institution: Vidzeme planning region administration (as process facilitator)

Target institutions: Ministry of Education and Science and Ministry of Economy – organizes evaluation of existing policy instruments and monitoring of national RIS3 strategy, participates in discussions on implementation of current policy instruments (action 1.1.).

Vidzeme Planning Region administration – in collaboration with regional stakeholders provides feedback on implementation of existing policies and policy instruments, organizes discussions and meetings (action 1.1.), prepares amendments in the Vidzeme planning region Development programme 2014-2020 strengthening governance of business and innovation issues in the region (action 1.2.).



Involved: Regional R&I stakeholders, Vidzeme Planning Region Development Council, municipalities.

Timeframe

Action 1.1. 2019 - 2020

Action 1.2. 2019.

Costs

No additional budget needed – action implemented using existing staff resources of the VPR administration.

Funding sources

Implementation of the Action will be financed from the running costs of the VPR administration.

Good practice example

Skåne Research and Innovation Council (FIRS) is an advisory body created by the Skåne Region for coordination implementation of regional innovation strategy and advise for the direction of policy. The goal of FIRS work is to strengthen Skåne's research and innovation power and make Skåne Europe's most innovative region 2020. Council activities include regular discussions with regional research and innovation stakeholders (via Skåne Soundingboard 2.0 platform) and making regular contribution to the Government's research and innovation proposals and national innovation strategy. FIRS is example of more demand-oriented policy, supporting synergies between private and public actors. Its work is recognized by Swedish national authorities that are revising their policy taking on board lessons from Skåne.

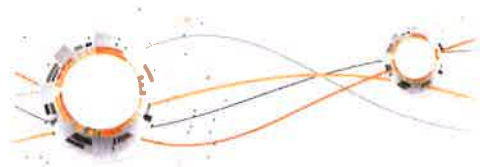
3.2. ACTION 2 Regional R&I consultative platform

Goal

To strengthen collaboration between regional research and innovation actors to promote RII access to SMEs

Rationale

RII holders, entrepreneurs, municipalities and society representatives in the Vidzeme region currently have no regular research and innovation related narrative. RII holders, VPR administration and some of regional municipalities are cooperating on ad hoc basis under various EU funded projects that are the main driving force of regional development. Potential of research and innovation and the role of RII in development of the region up to now has not been recognized by stakeholders. Small number of regional stakeholders, their cooperation experience and links with international partners are favourable preconditions for establishment of regional R&I cooperation platform. Experience of INNO INFRA SHARE partners from Saxonia and Skåne region shows that repeated interaction among involved actors, develops systematic relations that build up to a regional ecosystem, thus cooperation platform may become a basis of sustainable R&I ecosystem in the region. Such platform may serve as a pilot for other Latvian regions with multiplication potential at the national level.



According to the best practice examples, platforms serve as instruments for providing qualitative feedback on implementation of existing R&I policy, development of networks and new collaboration projects based on RII's in the region. Important function of such cooperation platforms is regular assessment of regional challenges and identification of available opportunities related to research and innovation using forecasting and future strategy workshops.

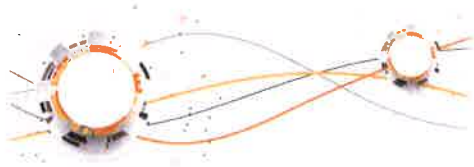
The overarching ambition of the regional R&I consultative platform is to impact the regional economy through more and better SME-RII collaborations. The platform will collaborate with key stakeholders and especially intermediary organisations (clusters, associations, technology transfer organisations (TTO), research transfer organisations (RTO)) to act as the broker and middle-man between SMEs and RIIs. Intermediary organisation is needed as neutral (and trusted) vehicle that can pull stakeholders together into a consistent direction to implement the Action Plan and Vidzeme planning region administration will take this role.

Geographical, social and institutional proximity facilitate interaction of knowledge. RIIs are means that may facilitate interaction but cannot force collaboration. In order to create a better functioning ecosystem larger involvement of various players is necessary including municipalities, policy makers, entrepreneurs and society representatives. Looking from system thinking perspective Vidzeme planning region sees potential in using existing initiatives and resources for establishment of larger network. As discussed in several local stakeholder meetings and local learning workshops, at the moment universities and scientific institutions organize various independent innovation and science promotion related events, municipalities organize various events related to entrepreneurship promotion, various industry representatives organize specific industry related events etc. Goals, content and target groups of these events are often overlapping but there is very limited connection among all these events and lack of coordination, knowledge and information sharing between the main stakeholders involved. Experience of Skåne region Innovation week showcased during the Skåne study visit and further discussed with the local stakeholder after the visit, shows that combination of various events under one joint umbrella creates higher reach and impact. Experience of Tartu City Government in organizing "Tartu Start-up Day" annual event, showcased and analysed in the joint Tartu and Vidzeme interregional stakeholder meeting in Tartu, also demonstrates that such events may potentially evolve into the central element of regional ecosystem.

Action 2 will directly contribute to the improvement of Vidzeme planning region Development programme 2020. Work of established consultative platform will contribute to the improvement of OP implementation quality.

Action

- 2.1. Set-up of the regional R&I consultative platform:
 - 2.1.1. Establishment of the platform's Steering Group, and its mandate,
 - 2.1.2. Kick-Off Meeting that should translate actions into a process and a roadmap of "to do's" derived from the Actions presented in this Action Plan; organisational and communication modalities; responsibilities and next steps,
 - 2.1.3. Organise up to 4 meetings per year to monitor progress of the Action Plan through a set of limited indicators to be agreed during platform's first meeting, including 2 meetings with the national authorities and stakeholders.



2.2. Analysis and scoping:

- 2.2.1. Bottom-up mapping and analysis of current and missing capabilities in terms of infrastructure, equipment, expertise and services, including analysis of business needs and opportunities, as well as analysis of obstacles to SME and RII collaboration in the region,
- 2.2.2. Scoping of regional priority areas including identification of key areas of interest, regional ambition and vision, identification of priority areas and leading champions,
- 2.2.3. Providing feedback and recommendations on existing R&I policy to the policy instrument MAs; exploration of new joint initiatives for building capacity and connections.

2.3. Networking and communication

- 2.3.1. Organisation of Vidzeme innovation week – regional annual R&I focused event gathering all stakeholders and promoting research and innovation in the region under a joint umbrella coordinated by the VPR, including various innovation related workshops, discussions, demonstrations, innovation related competitions and matchmaking between RII holders, potential users & international partners,
- 2.3.2. Coordination of communication efforts across the regional ecosystem by designing communication strategy, addressing information asymmetries between stakeholders and developing synergies between existing and future events.

Players involved

Responsible institution: Vidzeme planning region administration

Target institutions: Regional RII holders³¹, TTOs, RTOs, national authorities (Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Economics, Investment and Development Agency of Latvia etc.), regional entrepreneur organisations, clusters, business incubators, SMEs, municipalities, NGOs, experts.

Timeframe

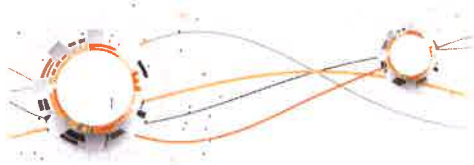
Action 2.1. 2019 - 2020

Action 2.2. 2019 – 2020

Action 2.3. 2019 I-III, 2020 I-III.

Costs

³¹ Vidzeme University of Applied Science and institutes working within the university system, Riga Technical University Cēsis Affiliate, Institute for Environmental solutions, Institute of Agricultural resources and economics under the Latvia University of Agriculture, technical schools from Valmiera, Cēsis, Smiltene and Priekule.



Regional R&I consultative platform - local travel and meeting organisation costs (not specified) covered by the involved stakeholder organisations represented on a platform and running costs of the VPR administration.

Vidzeme Innovation week - costs for organization of at least 3 – 5 local workshops and one international conference in the region during the Innovation week are financed on collaborative basis by involved regional stakeholders from various sources and projects. Coordination and communication of the Innovation week financed from the running costs of the VPR administration.

Funding sources

Daily functioning of the platform activities will be financed from the running costs of the VPR administration. Organisation of Innovation week will be financed on collaborative basis by regional stakeholders from various sources. VPR will ensure coordination of these resources.

Good practice examples

Three international examples can be seen as sources of inspiration for this ambition to 'Platformise' the regional network. First, the **Soundingboard 2.0**³² Meeting platform Skåne Innovation Support System is facilitated and supported by the Region Skåne. The work of Soundingboard is action-focused and based on collaboration and interaction with an aim to support implementation of Skåne's regional development strategy "Open Skåne 2030" and Skåne Innovation strategy. Platform unite all actors of the Skåne Innovation and Entrepreneurship System (official bodies, academia, companies, clusters, investors etc. and is coordinated by the region administration.

A second example is **FutureSax**³³ – knowledge and communication platform organized by the Saxon State Ministry for Economic Affairs, Labour and Transport uniting regional innovation and growth-related stakeholders.

*A best practice is the growth trajectory of Brainport Development*³⁴ – economic development agency of Brainport which has developed extensive experience with providing various piloting and experimenting solutions for companies and researchers, including Living labs that are serving as new knowledge transfer vehicles in the region. It has become one of the most effective Regional Agencies in Europe, representing the interest of its stakeholders and businesses internationally and toward all necessary organisations.

Skåne Innovation Week³⁵ - annual event taking place throughout the region, showcasing all innovations of regional actors and individuals. Skåne Innovation Week is a part of Region Skåne's work to implement its innovation strategy. Its aim is to further strengthen innovation culture, and the skills for innovation and entrepreneurship. Similar initiative, the **Tartu Start-up days**³⁶ are a regular annual event uniting various start-up related stakeholders and players at regional scale. In a few years this event has grown into event of national importance and serves as central node of Tartu region start-up and innovation ecosystem.

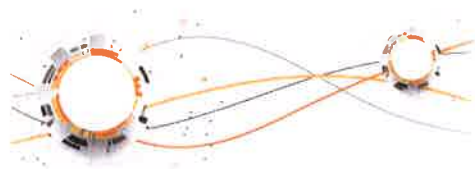
³² More information: www.skane.com/sv/soundingboard-20

³³ More information: www.futuresax.org

³⁴ More information: <https://brainporteindhoven.com>

³⁵ More information: www.skaneinnovationweek.com/about-skane-innovation-week

³⁶ More information: www.startupday.ee



3.3. ACTION 3 Training and motivation of RII holders

Goal

To increase RII awareness and capacity to access the demand side (SMEs)

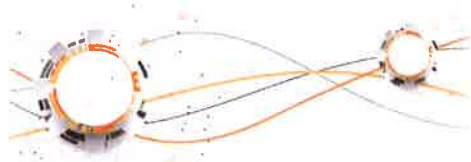
Rationale

SMEs lack awareness about the benefits of RII collaboration and are not easy to reach. They need an intermediary to talk to in a trustworthy way and act as a broker. SMEs culture is rather conservative, and they often lack trust both in each other and toward RIIs. On the other hand, RIIs are not always relevant to local SMEs by developing capabilities in areas where there is limited demand of local companies, but that can be interesting for companies in other EU regions. RIIs should better fit business needs and open to SMEs as to valorise their equipment, facilities and expertise. RII holders lack motivation for RII sharing, that stems from the existing institutional culture, insufficient entrepreneurial mindset among researchers and lack of practical knowledge and examples how RII sharing may be organized.

Best practice examples shared by project partners from Saxonia during peer reviews demonstrate that trainings in entrepreneurship, internationalization, best practice and practical solutions in RII sharing etc. are key to facilitate more entrepreneurial mindset among researchers and change the existing institutional culture towards reaching out for industry. During the joint interregional stakeholder meeting of Vidzeme planning region and Tartu City stakeholders from Latvia and Estonia identified similar challenges and high cooperation potential. Inspired by Saxonia region example Vidzeme planning region will organise trainings to generate more traffic between RIIs and industry and also grow future entrepreneurs from talents working for RIIs or other research organisations. Training may help RII owners to improve their pricing, facility/equipment management, and with the identification of more users (regionally or internationally), as well as with finding ways to reduce the cost of using the equipment for SMEs. It is planned to organise several focused seminars / workshops including such topics as regulatory (State Aid/ESIF) interpretation and RII impacts (pricing, scope, etc.), International networks and Scoping (how to increase the user base of RII internationally and how to create a regional user base for future RII). Although the main targets of the Action Plan are RII owners and SMEs, other stakeholders (regional scouts and intermediary organisations such as clusters, associations etc) are also important to include. Implementation of this action will directly contribute to the capacity of regional players and thus contribute to the policy implementation quality. Necessity of such trainings have been strongly emphasized and supported by the SO 1.1.1. Managing Authority during the stakeholder meetings as important means for improvement of quality of SO implementation.

Actions

- 3.1. Prepare training and awareness raising plan in accordance with identified needs
- 3.2. Training and follow-up
 - 3.2.1. Trainings and workshops for RII holders and other regional stakeholders organized by Vidzeme planning region.



3.2.2. Organise the follow-up on the training sessions and key lessons learnt including feedback to the policy makers

Players involved

Responsible institution: Vidzeme planning region administration

Target institutions: universities and scientific institutes (RII holders), regional scouts and intermediary organisations such as clusters and associations, professional education schools in the region, national authorities (MoES, MoE) and agencies (Investment and Development Agency of Latvia).

Timeframe

Action 3.1. 2019 I – VIII

Action 3.2. 2019 – 2020

Costs

Training costs – expert fee and workshop organisation costs. 2 trainings x ~ 2000-5000 EUR per training.

Funding sources

Actions will be financed from the running costs of the VPR administration and other sources not yet identified. During the stakeholder meeting with OP MAs possibilities to fund trainings from state budget has been discussed.

Good practice examples

FutureSax³⁷ – knowledge and communication platform organized by the Saxon State Ministry for Economic Affairs, Labour and Transport uniting regional innovation and growth-related stakeholders. Important part of platforms work is related to the capacity building of SMEs, RTOs, policy makers and intermediaries. For this purpose, platform regularly organizes learning groups, training, workshops for RII holders and other regional stakeholders and regional foresight exercises.

3.4. ACTION 4 International cooperation

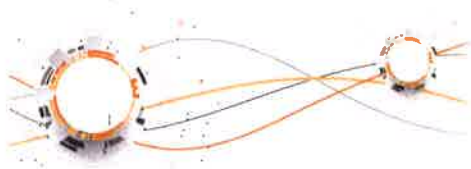
Goal

To increase international cooperation and policy transfer

Rationale

International cooperation in innovation is complex and hard to achieve but has big potential gains. INNO INFRA SHARE project partners have identified potential for continuation of the existing partnership towards new cooperation projects and actions. Cooperation ideas are based on similar challenges, similar types of technologies or on favourable conditions for policy transfer. One of the main challenges in Latvia are that

³⁷ More information: www.futuresax.org



existing policy instruments currently does not provide targeted support for RII sharing initiatives. Discussions with regional and national stakeholders (including MAs) highlighted that one of reasons for this problem was lack of understanding and information on RII sharing best practices during the programming of policy instruments.

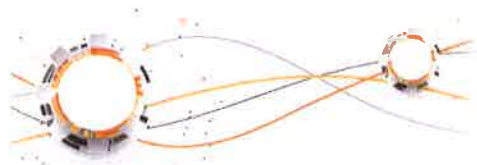
During the Peer review with project partners in April 2018 in Skåne Region OpenLab Skåne – EU funded project in Skåne Region as good practice of RII sharing was presented. OpenLab Skåne allows universities and incubator to provide regional companies with access to their existing research and innovation infrastructure. Policy makers at national level – Ministry of Education and Science and Ministry of Economy (MA of R&I related policy instruments) participating in the peer review and directly learning from the best practice example, stressed high transferability potential of the idea, supported and approved action idea as potentially important contribution to the implementation of policy instruments.

Based on MAs recommendation Vidzeme region expressed interest in transferring knowledge on establishment of Skåne OpenLab model on cooperation between RII holders and SMEs. Implementation of this action in cooperation with Skåne region will directly contribute to the capacity of regional players and provide best practice examples for improved policy measures, thus contributing to the policy planning capacity.

Vidzeme Planning Region intends to transfer the OpenLab Skåne model to Latvia as an additional activity approved and funded by the INTERREG Europe 2014.-2020. Programme. Activity will be implemented in close cooperation and approval of the Ministry of Economy. Current structure and division of ERDF funds for R&I does not allow financing of such projects in Latvia. To help better frame the implementation of the Action 4 an additional study visit/workshop in Skåne Region is planned during the initial phase of Action 4 implementation. Input from the study visit/workshop will be necessary for elaboration of detailed plan on transfer of OpenLab Skåne model in Latvia and elaboration of proposal for the ERDF Monitoring Committee (decision making body of the ERDF Operational programme). Important precondition for further inclusion of the OpenLab Skåne model in the policy instrument is close involvement of the MA representatives (Ministry of Economy) in the workshop, elaboration of detailed plan and its further promotion, as MoE is directly involved in the implementation of the action under the OP.

Implementation of the approved additional activity will provide VPR with the opportunity to elaborate a detailed plan on transfer of OpenLab Skåne model in Latvia and to elaborate a proposal for the ERDF Monitoring Committee (decision making body of the ERDF Operational program) in order to advocate inclusion of OpenLab Skåne model in the current policy instruments that are managed by the MA - Ministry of Economy, in particular the elaborated plan and proposal will address SO. 1.2.1.2. "Support for technology transfer system enhancement" and SO 1.2.1.1. "Support for new product and technology development in the competence centers". MA representative will be directly involved in the implementation and monitoring of the Additional activity. After the implementation of this additional activity a detailed report will be submitted to the INTERREG Europe 2014.-2020 Joint Secretariat.

Action



- 4.1. Policy transfer on Skåne OpenLab model
 - 4.1.1. Study visit (Semester 6): detailed exploration and assessment of OpenLab model involving national and regional stakeholders, including a study visit and workshop of 2 Vidzeme planning region experts and 1 stakeholder (RII holder and national policy maker representative) to Skåne Region. Goal of the study visit, and workshop is in-depth review of Skåne OpenLab model.
 - 4.1.2. Elaboration of detailed plan of transfer of the OpenLab model including proposal for targeted actions allowing implementation of OpenLab type projects under the existing policy instruments (Semester 6).
 - 4.1.3. Web meeting on review of the detailed plan and feedback (Semester 6).
 - 4.1.4. Presenting detailed plan in project partners meeting, gathering feedback and adjustment of the plan (Semester 6).
 - 4.1.5. Incoming visit and workshop of Skåne representative to Vidzeme region in order to support transfer and implementation of OpenLab Skåne model in Vidzeme region and to monitor the good practice transfer (Semester 7).
 - 4.1.6. Web meeting with Skåne Region experts for monitoring of implementation of the plan (Semester 7).
 - 4.1.7. Presenting results of the action in the project final dissemination event for gathering executives and policy makers from regions (Semester 7).

Action output: Detailed plan on transfer of OpenLab Skåne model (1) (Semester 6);
Monitoring report of the implementation of the good practice transfer (1) (Semester 7);
Final report on the good practice transfer results presented at project final dissemination event (Semester 7).

Players involved

Responsible institution: Vidzeme planning region administration

Target institutions: regional R&I consultative platform, including regional RII holders, national authorities (Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Economics, Ministry of Agriculture etc.), regional entrepreneur organisations, clusters, business incubators, SMEs, municipalities, NGOs, experts.

Involved: Skåne Region

Timeframe

Action 4.1. 2019 – 2020

Costs

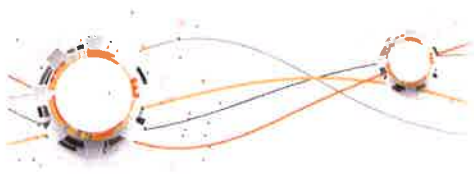
As approved by the JS for the implementation of the additional activity:

VPR Staff costs: preparing the visit and workshop content, communication with the stakeholders about the additional visits and workshops: 48 h total per visit.

Total: 1 600, 00 EUR

Staff travel costs, total: 2 850,00 EUR

External costs: travel and accommodation costs for 2 Vidzeme Planning Region experts and 1 stakeholder (representative of the Ministry of Economy (reference to the budget item 21).



Total: 2 288,00 EUR

Administrative costs: 240,00 EUR

Total costs for the implementation of the additional activity: 6 977,00 EUR

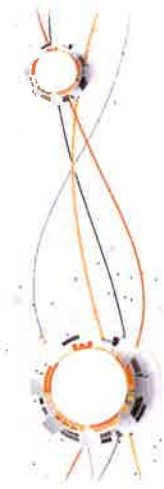
Funding sources

Action will be funded from the INTERREG Europe programme 2014.-2020.

Good practice examples

OpenLab Skåne³⁸ – EU funded project in Skåne Region jointly implemented by Malmö University, Lund University and the Smile Technology Business Incubator. The project allows universities and incubator to provide regional companies with access to their existing research and innovation infrastructure, and to develop new products. The project finances the work of coordinators, who work with companies, consult them, train their specialists for work with infrastructure. Companies, in turn, finance the cost of using the infrastructure and provide their specialists with equipment.

³⁸ More information: <http://openlabskane.se>



5. MONITORING AND EXPECTED IMPACT

Monitoring of the Action plan during 2019-2020 will be conducted by Vidzeme planning region administration. Vidzeme stakeholders will be involved in feedback and collaboration. Every two months project INNO INFRA SHARE partners will organize a web call to share information on Action plan implementation progress and provide mutual feedback.

Action	Indicator	How	Who
ACTION 1 Streamline policy framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of evaluation or planning related events participated - Number of proposals for improvement of policy instruments - Amendments elaborated in the regional planning documents 	<p>Records of VPR administration</p> <p>Report</p> <p>Decision of Regional development council</p>	VPR administration
ACTION 2 Regional R&I consultative platform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of meetings organized - Recommendations for matching needs and opportunities - Number of areas scoped 	<p>Records of VPR administration</p> <p>Report</p> <p>Report</p>	VPR administration
ACTION 3 Training and motivation of RII holders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Training plan - Number of RII holder representatives participating in the event - Number of events organized 	<p>Report</p> <p>Report</p> <p>Records of VPR administration</p>	VPR administration
ACTION 4 International cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of meetings organized - Report on study visit - Detailed plan and proposal 	<p>Records of VPR administration</p> <p>Report</p> <p>Paper</p>	VPR administration

