



Innogrow Project – Action A3.1 interregional workshop on innovation support centers for rural SMEs

Summary Report

General information

Lombardy Foundation for the Environment organized the Interregional Workshop on Innovation Hubs on 2nd and 3rd of March 2017 with the cooperation of the Lecco Campus of Polytechnic of Milan in the city of Lecco, north-east of Lombardy Region (Italy). The territorial campus of Lecco of Polytechnic of Milan, one of the most prominent European universities, was opened in 2011 and is now an example of fruitful cooperation between research institutions and private companies. The university has activated several laboratories to support companies that want to invest in research and innovation. Among the others, Lecco Innovation Hub is the research laboratory of Polytechnic of Milan that research innovative solution for the nautical sector, one of the most important in the territory with hundreds of companies in this field. For its attention to innovation of SMEs, its international dimension (25% of the students are foreign) and its relation with the rural territory of the province of Lecco, the local campus of Polytechnic of Milan was an ideal location for hosting the first Interregional Workshop of Innogrow Project.

Aims of the workshop

The mission of the workshop is to facilitate the exchange of ideas and experiences, acquisition of knowledge and inspiration on how to steer policy implementation in developing innovation support centers for rural economy SMEs. The interregional workshop will pursue the following particular objectives:

1. Highlight the most relevant needs and challenges (associated with the adoption of innovation by rural economy SMEs) to be addressed through regional policies.
2. Inform regional authorities about the impact of innovation technologies on SMEs' competitiveness and productivity.
3. Gather experience from different regions and countries towards coordinated strategies in developing and running innovation support centers.
4. Bring together elected representatives of regional public administrations and members of stakeholders' groups, to enable them benefit from a structured interaction, revolving around a specific thematic area.

Targets

The Interregional Workshop are oriented to key stakeholder of the regions involved in Innogrow project. Aim of the workshop was not only to provide Innogrow partners and their regional stakeholders with an effective opportunity to steer policy learning, but also contribute to dissemination of the topics addressed by Innogrow in our region and in the territory of Lecco. For this reason, we decided to open the workshop to every expert in our territory that is related to innovation and competitiveness of rural SMEs. We exploited our communication channels in order to increase the number of participants with students and external experts as well as public authorities and journalists. The first day covered technical topics regarding innovation hubs and other forms of cooperation between companies, as well as public measures and projects to sustain the growth of territories and companies, thus the target public were experts with high technical competences and interests. The second day policies and measures of Public institution, Private Foundation and



Universities to support research and innovation of rural SMEs were presented was then targeted to a broader public with representatives of Public Authorities, journalists and students.

Contents

For both days of the workshop are listed below the names of the speakers, their organization, and the title of their presentation with the main topics addressed.

Name of the speaker	Organization	Title of the presentation and main topics addressed
First Day of the Workshop, Thursday 2nd of March		
Maria Chiara Cattaneo	CRANEC, Catholic University of Milano	<i>Promoting Innovation and sustainable growth in the Alps – main problems and possible solutions for the development of new SMEs in the Alpine Area.</i>
Anna Rossi, Carlo Palazzoli	Lombardy Region	<i>Rural metropolitan area of Milan – presenting the “Milano Metropoli Rurale AQST”, a strategic territorial agreement for the reinforcement of the rural matrix of the metropolitan territory of Milano. Presentation of the Interreg Europe RUMORE project.</i>
Silvia Casiraghi	IDEAS Srl	<i>The Rural district of Adda Valley – Presentation of the rural district of Adda Valley and the strategic coordination of the local companies to transform potential conflict in synergies.</i>
Marco Chiapparini	Agro-food District of Valtellina	<i>Agro-food District of Valtellina – Presentation of the agri – food district of Valtellina and some data on the production and trade of local food products (wine, honey, Bresaola Salami).</i>



Gianluca Bellazzi	Oca Sforzesca Srl	<i>An Innovative SME and its sustainable food chain</i> – explanation of the importance of the goose salami supply chain for the territory of Lomellina and the importance of innovation to transform a rural SME and compete on international markets.
Fabio Dadati	La Casa Sull'Albero	<i>Innovation in the rural tourism sector: the hospitality of La Casa sull'Albero</i> – Innovative architecture, best level design and great respect for the environment to offer guest an unique experience in the Como Lake.
Antonio Ballarin - Denti	FLA	<i>Innovation and green economy in the framework of climate change strategies</i> – Climate change risks and vulnerabilities by business sectors. Interests and role of the private sectors in adaptation to climate change.
Sergio Valentini	Unioncamere Lombardia	<i>Innovation in rural areas: the role and experience of Chamber of Commerce</i> – the example of Lombardy Green Know – How Community to promote cooperation between companies in protecting the environment.
Rossella Pulsoni	Chamber of Commerce of Lecco	<i>Lecco innovation policies and its territorial projects: Lecco Eco Smart Land</i> – Presentation of the project "Lecco Eco Smart Land": supporting a general and systemic relaunch of economic, social and cultural competitiveness of Lecco.



Fabrizio Trigila	Parco Tecnologico Padano	<i>A best practice from the Parco Tecnologico Padano (=Technologic Park of Po Valley) – Promotion of SMEs in the fields of agri-food, Biomedicine and Bioeconomy in the rural territory of Lodi.</i>
Giovanni Gianola	Consorzio Premax	<i>Innovative products: the Premana collective brand of quality – the role of the territorial brand of Premana to support internationalization and competitiveness of rural SMEs.</i>
Second Day of the Workshop, Friday 3rd of March		
Antonio Ballarin Denti	FLA	<i>Presentation of Innogrow Project - overview and vision of Innogrow project.</i>
Ian Merrell	University of Newcastle Upon Tyne	<i>Rural business knowledge exchange and innovation: the contribution of rural enterprise hubs – Presentation of “Rural Growth Network” project with characteristics and successful examples of Innovation Hubs in rural areas.</i>
Mauro Piazza	Lombardy Regional Council	<i>Innovation in Lombardy Region and the Regional Law n.29/2016 “Lombardy is research and innovation”- Presentation of the Regional Law n.29/2016, its opportunities and effects for innovation of SMEs.</i>
Antonio Pasquini	Lombardy Region	<i>Regional policy for innovation: implementing the Lombardy Regional tool “Bando Aree interne” – Application of the Regional measure for inner areas “Bando Aree interne” in the municipality of Crandola.</i>



Roberto Tiezzi	Polytechnic of Milan	<i>The effective PMI network of Lecco</i> –presentation of the project “PMI Network of Lecco” to support innovation of SMEs.
Valeria Garibaldi	Fondazione Cariplo	<i>Fostering rural enterprise to preserve local traditions, historical landscape and the environment</i> – Presentation of “Attiv-Aree” project to support development of inner areas and “ReStartAlp” project to support innovative SMEs in the Alpine Space.

Outcomes and Policy Recommendations

From the discussion and the contribution of the experts, we can draft some conclusions that can be disseminated in other regions of the project. Goal of the workshop was to provide Innogrow regions with an effective opportunity to exchange ideas and experiences, acquisition of knowledge and inspiration on how to steer policy implementation. This document is intended to enable Innogrow partners to organize internal meetings within their organization to disseminate the experience learned. For this reason, we reported below the main conclusion from the discussion grouped by topic.

For what concerns rural SMEs we highlighted the following recommendations:

- Small and medium companies are usually flexible and reactive; take advantage of this aspect when innovating and promoting the growth of a territory. The size of a company could influence its capacity to introduce new technologies and business models.
- The attachment to the territory and the know-how that family companies inherit from their history is a significant values to combine innovation with high level quality of products. Moreover, rediscovering ancient production techniques as well as recipes could represent an effective innovation.
- To compete on international markets could be hard for small size companies; however, strongly export-oriented districts have the ability to reach different markets and niches.
- Vertical integration inside the districts allow to reduce the production costs.

Regarding Innovation Hubs, we underline the following aspects in order to increase their probability of success in supporting companies in innovation and growth:

- Innovation Hubs must encourage networking providing informal spaces (meeting rooms, conference facilities) and hosting events.
- They must have high level of connectivity (Broadband, transport, location, locally embedded, linked to institutions, skilled workforce).
- They must be flexible (different size office accommodation, flexible rental agreements).
- They must have pro-active managers and tenants: they work better hen close to full-capacity.

From the experience observed in Lombardy Region with the regional law 29/2016 “Lombardy is Research and Innovation”, we can outline some policy recommendations for institution that want to



define effective instrument to support innovation and growth and that can be reported within the Action Plans that every partner of Innogrow has to produce by the end of the project:

- There must be a strong regional governance of the research field. It is fundamental that all general directorates are involved in the innovation process and there must be also partnerships with local and national government. Connections with the EU strategies (such as EUSALP for Lombardy Region) are also useful.
- A well-defined and certain timeline for obtaining financial support is essential for the success of the measures.
- Involve the civil society, guarantee transparency, establish a proper evaluation process to determine the impact of policies and measures.

Communication Material

According to the communication plan of Innogrow project and the internal communication policy of Lombardy Foundation for the Environment (certified by ISO 9001 label) , we developed the following communication materials, in order to inform as many people as possible on the aims and contents of the workshop:

- Save the date: a brief document to explain location, venue and date of the Interregional Workshop. This first document was create before the agenda of the workshop and spread by email and FLA's newsletter in order to inform people about the organization of the workshop.
- Agenda: this document contained a well detailed program of the event for both days, with information on speakers, the contents of the workshop, information on how to reach the campus of Lecco of Polytechnic of Milan, Innogrow logo and its partnership.
- Innogrow brochure: in order to inform speakers and participants on aims and goals of Innogrow project, we printed and distributed Innogrow prochure before and during the event. In total, for the interregional workshop were printed and distributed among participants 100 brochures.

Communication channels

- FLA's institutional newsletter: 1.500 recipients
- Innogrow website: according to the communication plan of Innogrow project, we provided information on the Interregional workshop in order to update project website and social network.
- FLA's website: information on interregional workshop was posted on the home page of FLA's institutional website.
- Press release: the press release for journalists was sent in order to inform them about aim and contents of Interrigional workshop, as well as goals, source of financing and partnership of Innogrow project.
- Official invitations to public authorities, experts, stakeholders and journalists were sent well before the date of the event.

Facilities

Regional stakeholders and Innogrow partners came from all Europe to attend the interregional Workshop in Lecco. At the workshop were present also regional and local public authorities, students and external experts form Italy. To increase the quality of this experience we offered to two main



services to our guests and participants, in order to facilitate the exchange of policy experiences and create a stimulating environment for both speakers and participants.

- Interpreting service. To facilitate the policy learning, we decided to provide participants with a dedicated interpreting service in order to facilitate the transfer of policy experience. Because of high cost of the interpreting service, we decide to limit this service to the second day, where the target public was broader and less used to attending international events. This service gave public authorities the opportunity to present their experience without forcing them to use a foreign language, that would have been resulted in a limited communication ability of speakers.
- Residence: the local campus of Lecco of Polytechnic of Milan is served by the student residence "Adolf Loos" (the former Hospital of Lecco), a very modern structure with all services for international guest and only a few meters far from the room of the workshop.

Annexes

- Agenda of the workshop
- Save the date
- Attendance sheets
- .zip folder with photos
- Presentations