

**INNO  
INDUSTRY**  
Interreg Europe

 European Union  
European Regional  
Development Fund



The Business Agency  
of Lower Austria

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# **ACTION PLAN**

## **INNO Industry - Improving innovation delivery of policies within 4.0 industry in Europe.**

LOWER AUSTRIA  
ECOPLUS. THE BUSINESS AGENCY OF LOWER AUSTRIA

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## Part I – General information

Project: **INNO Industry - Improving innovation delivery of policies within industry 4.0 in Europe**

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## Part II – Policy context

The Action Plan aims to impact:    X       Investment for Growth and Jobs programme  
         European Territorial Cooperation programme  
  X       Other regional development policy instrument

### **Policy instrument initially addressed: ERDF Programme Investment in Growth and Jobs Austria 2014-2020, IP 1.b**

The **ERDF Investment in Growth and Jobs Austria 2014-2020 OP Investment priority 1.b, measure M6\_FTI\_IP1b\_MN4** co-finances the **Cluster Program Lower Austria 2015-2020**.

Based on the Economic Strategy Lower Austria 2020 (Lower Austria's RIS3), this programme provides financial **support** for the **management** of Lower Austrian **cluster initiatives**.

The implementing body of the program is the Lower Austrian Business Agency ecoplus, a 100% subsidiary of the regional government of Lower Austria. Based on comprehensive cluster potential analyses and the decision of the regional government to support a cluster initiative, ecoplus manages the Lower Austrian cluster initiatives as an "umbrella" cluster organisation.

Currently, there are four cluster initiatives: green building, food, plastics and mechatronics. The four cluster management teams within ecoplus raise awareness for new trends and challenges, identify common topics and most importantly initiate collaborative RDI or qualification projects. Digital transformation of the regional businesses is a focus topic in all four cluster initiatives.

Another measure of the **ERDF Programme Investment in Growth and Jobs Austria 2014-2020 OP Investment priority 1.b, measure M6\_FTI\_IP1b\_MN4** co-finances the programme **House of Digitalization**. Implementing body is ecoplus Digital (an affiliated company of ecoplus). The programme supports setting up and maintaining a network of digital technology providers in order to use synergies and connect their know-how with demand of regional companies and a web platform

for information and networking. Amongst others ecoplus Digital and the House of Digitalization network organize awareness raising events and trainings.

A third measure of the **ERDF Programme Investment in Growth and Jobs Austria 2014-2020: IP 1.b, M4\_FTI\_IP1b\_MN2 (Innovation Coaching and Support)** co-finances the programme **Technology and Innovation Partner Lower Austria**.

TIP is a joint initiative between the Economic Chamber of Lower Austria and the Provincial Government of Lower Austria. TIP is an organisational unit of the Economic Chamber of Lower Austria.

TIP is supporting companies (focussing on SME) in their innovation activities by:

- Awareness raising for the importance of innovation
- Broadening the scope of „innovation" (all aspects that are necessary to bring an idea successfully to market) - not only „technology leaders"
- Innovation coaching
- Offering a comprehensive service portfolio

Like the Lower Austrian Cluster Programme, the TIP Programme is a “soft measure”. It finances staff and other costs of an intermediary, who provides innovation services to companies. The policy instrument addressed does not finance projects of companies themselves. Companies use other regional funds (e.g. the additional policy instrument 2.2.2b) or national or European funds to get public funding for their projects.

#### **Influence of INNO Industry:**

As described above, the policy instrument addressed (ERDF OP Austria 2014-2020) provides support through services of innovation intermediaries (soft measures). A new service provided by the cluster management or the TIP consultants based on the learnings from INNO Industry (see action 2) is therefore considered **improved management of the policy instrument addressed**.

For example, the introduction of a new innovation management tool such as the Swedish best practice [Kickstart Digitalization](#) (see **action 2**) mobilizing businesses to make better use of data for new business models, more efficient production or logistics, etc.

As the new programme 2021-2027 has not started yet, the support from **ERDF Investment in Growth and Jobs Austria 2014-2020 OP Investment priority 1.b** for the **Cluster Programme, the House of Digitalization** and the **TIP Programme** was **prolonged until end of 2022**.

#### **Additional Policy instrument addressed: Lower Austrian Fund for Economy and Tourism**

This regional fund supports programmes and projects in line with the strategies of the Province of Lower Austria for the development of the business location, primarily the [Economic Strategy Lower Austria 2020](#), but also the [Lower Austrian Digitalization Strategy](#).

The regional fund supports several schemes, amongst others amongst others feasibility studies, individual and collaborative R&D&I projects of companies, or investments in technologies. In the past, the regional government also launched specific calls to foster digital transformation.

#### **Influence of INNO Industry:**

The learnings from INNO Industry influenced 2 calls for digital transformation projects of companies in 2020/2021 ("Digi4SME" and "Digi4Business", see **action 1**) financed by the regional funds. New features of these calls were:

- a) enlarged target group
- b) simplified, faster application process
- c) changed funding rates
- d) in general, the threshold for the innovation level of project proposals was set a little bit lower than previous innovation calls.

Especially point a) led to **new projects** which would not have been funded without this change influenced by INNO Industry. We therefore monitor and report on the number of companies implementing digital transformation projects benefitting from the newly enlarged target group of the calls “Digi4SME” and Digi4Business”. In addition, we will monitor and report the total volume of funding granted to these projects as amount of funding influenced by the project.

### Joint effort of regional stakeholders involved

In order to collect all relevant information, facilitate co-development of actions and to ensure broad acceptance of actions, ecoplus gathered representatives of the regional government and all relevant innovation support intermediaries gathered in joint stakeholder meetings (10-20 people) two times per year. Organizations involved:

- Office of Regional Government of Lower Austria: Department for Economy, Tourism & Technology, Department International & European Affairs,
- ecoplus departments: Clusters, Technopol Programme, Digitalisation
- Chamber of Commerce: TIP Technology and Innovation Partner Lower Austria, Industry unit
- tecnet equity ltd., Department technology transfer
- Accent - start up service ltd.

The open, interactive and structured exchange of experience of these players on interregional topics is very much appreciated. The participants decided to continue the exchange also in phase 2 and beyond the project.

### SWOT ANALYSIS of (Lower) Austrian policies fostering clusters to support digital transformation

As starting point for mutual learning and the development of actions for improvement all partners analysed the status quo, i.e. **strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats** of:

- **policies for clusters and digital transformation of companies** as well as
- already existing **cluster activities to support digital transformation.**

On 20 November 2019, ecoplus organized a workshop with 18 participants representing the Lower Austrian innovation ecosystem, which resulted in a SWOT Analysis addressing to following dimensions:

1. Relevant Policies (Strategies and Funding Programmes) for clusters and/or digital transformation.
2. Support for companies / cluster members for digital transformation
3. Support for cluster management (or similar) organisations
4. Main players: coordination & interaction in triple helix
5. Cluster activities to support digital transformation

**OVERVIEW SWOT ANALYSIS of policies for clusters and digital transformation of companies as well as already existing cluster activities to support digital transformation in LOWER AUSTRIA**

Dimension	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<b>Policies (Strategies and programmes)</b>	<p>1 Regional strategies and programmes coordinated by same Reg. Gov. unit.</p> <p>2 Well, established, innovation system, close collaboration in develop. &amp; implementation of strategies</p> <p>3 Long term financing for cluster (and other) programmes backed by regional strategies &amp; clear monitoring</p> <p>4 Communication between policy makers, intermediaries and companies allows flexible adaptation of support for companies</p>	<p>5 Strict limitation to precompetitive support</p> <p>6 ERDF financial reporting rules (for programmes co-funded by ERDF)</p>	<p>7 Increase international visibility</p> <p>8 Focus on niches with value added for the region</p> <p>9 Digitalisation as a “door opener” for inter-department cooperation.</p> <p>10 Position Lower Austria as a tested for pilot projects</p> <p>11 Make better use of vicinity to Vienna</p> <p>12 Further foster life-long learning...</p> <p>13 Disseminate success stories, communicate opportunities of digitalisation</p>	<p>14 Speed of technology development and market changes vs acceptance in society</p> <p>15 Changes on labour market loss/downgrading of jobs, lack of skilled people needed for new jobs</p> <p>16 Too high expectations of politicians and businesses</p> <p>17 Cyber attacks</p> <p>18 Lack of internationality</p>

<p><b>Support for companies / cluster members</b></p>	<p>1 Broad variety of support for companies specifically for digitalisation but also calls without thematic focus (Mainstream programmes flexible to allow digi projects)</p> <p>2 Broad variety of experienced intermediaries in the region help identifying funding instruments and initiating projects</p> <p>3 Relevant know-how available at universities of applied science and technical colleges; flexibility of higher education institutions; good basic technical education</p> <p>4 Open cooperation culture</p>	<p>5 Lack of clarity due to broad variety of support instruments</p> <p>6 Support for training &amp; qualification available. Nevertheless, still a lack of skilled staff.</p> <p>7 Lack of low threshold and onsite consulting for businesses</p> <p>8 Procedures to prepare and approve projects take too much time</p> <p>9 Strict limitation to precompetitive support</p>	<p>10 Update analysis of companies' needs (currently in development)</p> <p>11 Support international cooperation to increase int. visibility</p> <p>12 Support development of test beds</p> <p>13 Support "cross-regional" projects with Viennese partners</p>	<p>14 Focus on technology development rather than on market needs</p> <p>15 Legal framework conditions: data security, GDPR, international recruiting</p>
<p><b>Support for cluster management</b></p>	<p>1 Long term financing for cluster management organisation and other programmes (Technopolis, TTPs, etc)</p> <p>2 The programmes are backed by the Economic and Digitalisation Strategy; involved in development and implementation</p> <p>3 Clear monitoring (BSC) based on economic goals, biannual review</p> <p>4 European Cluster Management Excellence Gold Label</p>	<p>5 Staff limitation, addressing new topics means less resources for other topics</p> <p>6 ...</p>	<p>7 Open up to new target groups</p> <p>8 New concepts to address digital challenges</p>	<p>9 Not the right tools? ...</p> <p>10 ...</p>

<p><b>Interaction of main players</b></p>	<p>1 Close collaboration of Reg. Gov. and intermediaries, regular monitoring and discussion in biannual review meetings.</p> <p>2 Several coordination formats among regional players (four fixes etc.)</p> <p>3 Austrian platforms to coordinate national and regional strategies and activities</p>	<p>4 Overlaps of activities of different ministries</p> <p>5 ...</p>	<p>6 Incentives for cross-institutional cooperation through new indicators</p> <p>7 Foster cooperation with regional DIH "House of Digitalisation"</p>	<p>8 ...</p> <p>9 ...</p>
<p><b>Cluster other Intermediaries Activities</b></p>	<p>10 Broad selection of services: awareness raising, training, finding partners, testing</p> <p>11 Regional service providers collaborate</p>	<p>12 Lack of clarity due to broad variety of support instruments and service providers</p> <p>13 Difficulties of mobilize small companies: "digitalization" too abstract, lack of understanding what is possible (e.g. what do we understand as new business model?), lack of strategic vision, passion and resources...</p> <p>14 Lack of low threshold and onsite consulting for businesses</p> <p>15 Dependency from IT monopolists</p>	<p>16 Develop testbeds for pilot projects: make use of diverse economic structure and vicinity to Vienna</p> <p>17 Identify market / technology niches</p> <p>18 Disseminate success stories, better communicate opportunities of digitalisation</p> <p>19 Foster lifelong learning</p> <p>20 Help increase international visibility</p>	<p>21 Not the right tools?</p> <p>22 Lock-in, fail to address new companies</p>



With the help of the INNO Industry 2.0 Action Plan, we specifically want to improve the following **weaknesses**:

- Difficulties of mobilize small companies: “digitalization” too abstract, lack of understanding what is possible (e.g. what do we understand as new business model?), lack of strategic vision, passion and resources...
- Procedures to prepare and approve projects take too much time

And seize the following **opportunities**:

- New concepts for clusters to address digital challenges
- Disseminate success stories, better communicate opportunities of digitalisation

### **Endorsement**

The Lower Austrian Government Department Economy, as intermediate body for ERDF OP in Lower Austria, policy maker in charge of the Lower Austrian Cluster Programme and the TIP Programme as well as managing authority for the regional economic support instruments, was intensively involved in the interregional learning process as well as in the regional interaction with the stakeholder group.

**The Department Economy endorses the INNO Industry Action Plan.**

**More specifically the Department Economy:**

- **already implemented learnings from the INNO Industry project in 2 new calls for digital transformation projects of companies launched in 2020/2021: "Digi4SME" and "Digi4Business" (action 1).**
- **promotes the implementation of the Kickstart Digitalisation concept in Lower Austria as a new service offered by Lower Austrian intermediaries, i.e. TIP and clusters (action 2).**

## Part III – Details of the actions envisaged

### **ACTION 1: New calls for Digital Transformation of Businesses (“Digi4SME”, Digi4Business”)**

#### **1.1 The background**

##### **Challenge**

Supporting regional businesses in addressing the challenges of digital transformation is a core objective of the Lower Austrian Economic Strategy 2025 as well as the Digitalization Strategy.

For this purpose, the Lower Austrian Regional Government provides non-financial support (e.g. services of clusters and the House of Digitalisation co-funded by ERDF) and financial support to companies via calls for proposals under the Regional Funds for Economy and Tourism.

Specific calls to foster digital transformation launched by the Regional Government in the past:

- Economy 4.0 („Wirtschaft 4.0“): 4 calls (2016-2019) supporting concept development, feasibility studies and/or implementation of process or organizational innovations of companies in Lower Austria with varying focus topics (2016: smart production, IoT; 2019: value chain improvement).
- RTI Call Digitalisation („FTI Call Digitalisierung“): 3 calls ([2017-2019](#)) supporting applied research of university or non-university research institutions, funding rate: 40-60%.
- Call for feasibility studies, development and testing of prototypes („[Prototypenbau](#)“ DE) for businesses.

The SWOT analysis carried out in INNO Industry in November 2019 revealed room for improvement, especially the need to work on faster and more simple application processes to support businesses in digital transformation.

##### **Relevance of INNO Industry / Lessons learned where and when:**

The Department Economy of the Office of the Lower Austrian Government as responsible body for the policy instrument was involved in the INNO Industry project from the very beginning. P2 ecoplus informed the Department Economy about the Good Practices of partners already right after the kick-off meeting in Dobova/SI (2019/09). At the at the project meeting in Krems/AT (2020/03), the Department Economy exchanged experience with INNO Industry partners about relevant funding instruments, such as digitalisation vouchers and other support schemes available and collected additional info in bilateral communication via email. Main source of inspiration came from the **Good Practices:**

- **Portugal (PP5): [Industry 4.0 Voucher \(Vale Indústria 4.0\)](#)**
- **Slovenia (LP): [SMALL-SCALE INCENTIVES FOR SMEs - VOUCHERS](#)**

In June 2020 the Department Economy launched the new call “Digi4SME” and **integrated the following specific aspects inspired by the learnings from INNO Industry partners:**

- a) enlarged target group: in previous Lower Austrian digitalisation calls only producing companies were eligible. The new call also addressed SMEs from service sector (tourism, transport, trade, etc)

- b) simplified, faster application process: no cut-off dates, companies can submit projects on a continuous basis, project evaluation by a jury meeting at a weekly basis.
- c) support for rather small projects (max 50,000 EUR project volume) with a rather high funding rate up to 50%; previously projects were funded up to even 200,000 EUR, but up to only max 35%.

## 1.2 Description of Action

**Step 1:** The Regional Government Department for Economy (WST3) integrated the specific aspects

- enlarged target group,
- higher funding rate but smaller project volume,
- simplified application, lower innovation level).

in the guidelines for the call "Digi4SME".

As legal basis served existing funding regulations (de minimis) for corporate development subsidies and for guarantees. A change in the regulations was not necessary.

**Step 2:** The Department Economy opened the call "Digi4SME" ("Digi4KMU" in German) from June 9<sup>th</sup> until October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020 with a total budget of max € 10 Mio.

It consisted of 3 strands:

- 1) digi Assist: support for basic innovation and digitalisation consulting (funding scheme already existed before).
- 2) digi Concept: support for concept development to elaborate which digital technologies will be used in which areas and to what extent; grant of up to 50% of a project volume of up to maximum of € 50,000.00 (minimum € 5,000), eligible costs: external expertise
- 3) digi Investment: support for investments up to a maximum of € 50,000.00 (min € 5,000.00) at 50% with a grant. eligible costs: hardware and software + related external expertise (eg for qualification), staff costs as lump sum (10% of investment costs). Furthermore, companies can apply for a liability of 80% of the bank loan for the costs remaining after the grant of the subsidy up to a maximum of € 100,000.00.

The number of applications was far beyond expectations. The evaluation showed that about half of the companies applied for regional innovation funding for the first time. From June to October 2020, 227 projects were approved with a total funding volume of € 3,770,257 Mio. Further 378 proposals were already in the pipeline waiting for approval. The Regional government therefore decided to launch a second call (see step 3).

**Step 3:** On November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2020, the Department Economy opened a second call named "Digi4Business" ("Digi4Wirtschaft" in German) with again a total volume of max. € 10 Mio. The eligible activities in the 3 strands (digi Assist, digi Concept and digi Investment, see above) remained the same. Again, the call was open for producing and service providing companies. The simplified application procedure remained the same. Different from the first call, the target group was enlarged to also big companies. The maximum project volume for digi Concept funding was reduced to € 30,000.00, for digi Investment to maximum 70,000.00.

The call was open until October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021. However, the total funding volume of the additional € 10 Mio. was spent already in June 2021.

## **Step 5: Evaluation**

In both calls "Digi4SME" and "Digi4business" in total, the Department Economy received 1,532 project proposals including 756 applications came from companies, who applied for regional funding for innovation activities for the first time ever. 1,084 projects were approved with a total funding volume of € 19,063,763,00.

Amount influenced by INNO Industry: We consider the simplified, faster application process improved management of the policy instrument - hence without influence on the amount of funding.

However, the enlarged target group led to additional approved projects of SMEs from the service sector (tourism, transport, trade, etc), which would not have been eligible without the improvements thanks to the learnings from the INNO Industry. These additional projects approved in total amount to 251 additional approved projects with a total funding volume of € 3,573,449.00.

In terms of mobilizing new actors in the regional innovation system, the calls were considered very positive (almost 50%). The quality level of the project proposals was also evaluated very positively by the Jury.

Regarding the evaluation of impact of the calls at company level, the Regional Government Department Economy considers to do a survey among beneficiaries with sufficient time distance (end of 2022/beginning of 2023).

### **1.3 Players involved**

- Regional Government Department for Economy (WST3): managing authority
- Chamber of Commerce, Technology & Innovation partners: implementation body of strand 1 digi Assist
- Lower Austrian Investment Ltd. (NÖ Bürgschaften und Beteiligungen GmbH): implementation body in strand 3 digi Investment
- ecoplus. The Business Agency of Lower Austria, departments Cluster: promotion of new funding scheme, matchmaking of partners.
- ecoplus Digital: promotion of new funding scheme, matchmaking of partners.

### **1.4 Timeframe**

- Adaptation of the call guidelines: 2020/03-05
- Call "Digi4SME" open: 2020/06-10
- Call "Digi4Business" open/funding available: 2020/11-2021/06
- Evaluation of the calls: 2021/06-09 (evaluation of impact at company level: ca. 2022/10 – 2023/02.)

### **1.5 Costs**

The total funding budget for "Digi4SME" and "Digi4Business" was € 20 Mio. (€ 10 Mio each). (However, the funding influenced by INNO Industry through the enlarged target group is only the share of the budget assigned to projects of service providing companies, i.e. € 3,573,449.00 as described above.)

### **1.6 Funding sources:**

Lower Austrian Fund for Economy and Tourism (see above additional policy instrument addressed).

### **1.7 Monitoring**

The companies were able to now submit their proposals on a continuous basis and the approval process was very short, based on proposal evaluations by a jury meeting at a weekly basis. In order to keep track of this fast process, the Regional Government Department Economy implemented a “dashboard” monitoring:

- Number of applications (per week, per strand, companies applying for public innovation funding for the 1<sup>st</sup> time)
- Project volume / funding volume approved (per week)
- Number of projects (per strand, per company size, per sector, per geographical district)

In the framework of INNO Industry we monitor the share of projects that would not have been eligible without the improvements thanks to the learnings from the INNO Industry, namely the additional approved projects of SMEs from the service sector (tourism, transport, trade, etc).

## **ACTION 2: Introduction of the Kick Start Digitalization Concept**

### **1. The background**

#### **Challenge:**

The Regional Government Department Economy asked Lower Austrian companies about their digitalisation activities and challenges in a survey carried out early 2020. It showed that the awareness for digital technologies has significantly increased since the last survey in 2016. The percentage of companies applying digital technologies (especially sensors/process monitoring and cloud computing) is raising, as well as the cooperation with business partners, suppliers, research organisations and IT specialists. On the other side, a strong need appeared in exchanging ideas on potential application areas.

In the INNO Industry SWOT analysis workshop with Lower Austrian stakeholders in November 2019, the intermediaries reported difficulties in mobilizing especially small companies for digitalisation projects: the term “digital” is too abstract, there is a lack of understanding what is possible (e.g. what do we understand as new business models?), a lack of strategic vision and of resources. The intermediaries expressed in interest in learning from partner regions how to mobilize companies for digital transformation.

#### **Relevance of INNO Industry / Lessons learned where and when:**

The **Swedish Good Practice [Kick Start Digitalization](#)** is a method to boost awareness about digitalization opportunities and to stimulate initial digitalization activities for competitiveness in SMEs. In 3 Workshops SMEs are mobilized to think (“without a box”) of potential digital transformations of their processes, products/services and business models. A key role in these workshops is an “inspirer”, who stimulates the new thinking, e.g. with show cases for digital transformation of local companies. In Sweden, more than 600 companies have already gone through Kickstart in the last 3 years. 92% of Kickstart participants report that they have received new ideas on how their companies could use the opportunities of digitalisation. 94% have started new digitalisation projects, increased the pace of ongoing projects or planned digitalisation projects after completing Kickstart.

P2 ecoplus learned about the Swedish Good Practice [Kick Start Digitalization](#) at the Kick-off meeting in Dobová (Sept 2019) and gained deeper knowledge at the project meeting in Krems (March 2020). At the meeting in Krems also the ecoplus cluster manager of the Green Building Cluster Lower Austria was involved and decided to try to transfer this service into the Green Building Cluster.

P2 ecoplus discussed the idea with regional stakeholders (LSG Meetings on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2019 and 18<sup>th</sup> June 2020) in order to jointly clarify their role and identify potential Austrian “inspirers”.

In an online meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2020, P6 RISE offered to train the Lower Austrian participants in a one-day train-the-trainer workshop on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2020, which was held online due to the COVID19 travel restrictions.

The workshop on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2020 gathered 11 participants: cluster management staff of the Green Building and the Mechatronics Cluster, representatives of other intermediary organisations such as the start-up support agency accent, the Technology & Innovation Partners, tecnet, the regional Government Department for Economy and 3 external digitalisation experts, who could act as Kickstart Digitalisation “inspirers” in Lower Austria. The Lower Austrian stakeholder group decided to discuss the transferability of the Kickstart Digitalisation Concept with companies in the Green Building Cluster and to adapt it to the region (or if possible to Austria). One of three digitalisation experts, who had

participated in the train-the-trainer workshop, was subcontracted to support this process. The workshop materials provided by P6 RISE 3 were translated into German, the Swedish show cases for digital transformation were replaced by Austrian cases. The concept was intensively discussed and tested in three workshops with 8 companies from the Lower Austrian Green Building Cluster, who applied to participate in this exercise. Due to the COVID restrictions, these workshops were postponed a several times and finally took place in September/October 2021.

#### Specific aspects **learned and “transferred”**:

- The Kickstart training material includes very valuable tools to mobilize entrepreneurs to think outside the box. The feedback of the involved 8 companies was very positive.
- Distribution of roles: most important an excellent “inspirer” understanding the world of SME and able to showcase regional examples. Very good moderation skills of moderator and inspirer needed.
- Especially small companies are stuck in their daily business. How to motivate them to participate in the workshops to start thinking or rethink their digital transformation?
  - Work on a very clear communication: companies have to understand what’s in for them: inspiration for ideas, guidance in breaking digitalisation down into small steps to start with, peer exchange, etc.
  - Involve regional innovation actors such as clusters, Technology and Innovation Partners (TIP), etc. to address as many companies as possible on site;
  - Involve companies, who already know Kickstart Digitalisation as “ambassadors”
  - Offer Kickstart Digitalisation in the forefront of an upcoming funding call for digital transformation projects, in order to get even better project proposals
  - Workshops should be free of charge for participating companies.
  - Ideally 6-10 companies, 2-3 people/company, mainly for SMEs but also relevant for large enterprises.

## **2. Description of Action**

**Step 1:** Adaptation of Swedish Kickstart Digitalisation training materials: translation to German, identification and description of Austrian successful examples for digital transformation of SMEs

**Step 2:** Workshops with Green Building Cluster member companies to validate the use of the Kick Start Digitalisation concept to potential Austrian beneficiaries

**Step 3:** Evaluate learnings and results; share experience with P6 RISE;

**Step 4:** Involve /exchange experience with stakeholders of regional and national level (e.g. Platform Industry 4.0) to see options for further roll out. – This step was unfortunately not successful. The Austrian Platform Industry 4.0 is currently not interested in offering Kickstart Digitalisation workshops on a national level.

**Step 5:** Roll out:

Based on the positive feedback of the Green Building stakeholders, the Regional Government Department Economy agreed to promote Kickstart Digitalisation as a new service offered to Lower Austrian companies. In coordination meetings on 21th October, 27<sup>th</sup> October and 18<sup>th</sup> November 2021, representatives of the Department Economy, ecoplus, ecoplus Digital and TIP discussed and agreed on a step-by-step roll-out.

“Pilot”: A first sequel of 3 workshops will be organized in January/February 2022 (if the COVID situation allows it) in cooperation of ecoplus clusters, ecoplus digital (House of Digitalisation) and TIP. They will all disseminate info on the workshops. Target group for these workshops will now be companies from different sectors. Representatives of ecoplus clusters, ecoplus digital and TIP will be involved also as co-moderators in parallel sessions. The workshop costs (room catering, external expert/inspirer) will be financed from the Programme House of Digitalization (co-funded by ERDF – policy instrument addressed, see below).

Then TIP will take over the ownership of the Kickstart Digitalisation offer in Lower Austria. Roll-out phase 1: TIP will organize four workshop sequels in the period March to June 2021 and continue with further workshops if there is enough demand. ecoplus clusters and ecoplus digital will support, by advertising the workshops among their target groups and (co-)moderating workshops.

### **3. Players involved**

- Regional Government Department for Economy
- Ecoplus, department Clusters
- ecoplus Digital (House of Digitalisation)
- Chamber of Commerce: TIP Technology and Innovation Partner Lower Austria
- Other local stakeholders: University of applied Science IMC Krems, accent, tecnet
- 10 companies (Green Building Cluster members)

### **4. Timeframe**

- Adaptation of Swedish Kickstart Digitalisation training materials: 2020/10
- Workshops: initially planned in 2020/11-12; due to COVID19 restrictions postponed to 2021/09-10.
- Evaluation: internal evaluation Green Building Cluster 2021/10, Exchange of experience with regional and national stakeholders for further roll-out: 2020/10 – 2022/11, Exchange of experience with P6 RISE: 2021/12.
- Roll-out: “Pilot”: 2022/01-02, First phase roll-out: 2022/03-06 (continuation roll-out if positive feedback until 2022/06)

### **5. Costs**

Per Workshop sequel: ca. € 5,000 (mainly external expertise costs for “inspirer”, room and catering)

Per participant: ca € 250 (10 companies á 2 staff members)

Total costs for “Pilot” and roll-out phase 1: € 25,000 (1+4 workshop sequels á € 5,000)

### **6. Funding sources:**

- “Pilot” (2022/01-02): Programme House of Digitalization co-funded by ERDF Programme Investment in Growth and Jobs Austria 2014-2020 OP Investment priority 1.b, measure M6\_FTI\_IP1b\_MN4
- Roll-out phase 1 (2022/03-06): Programme Technology and Innovation Partner Lower Austria (TIP) co-funded by ERDF Programme Investment in Growth and Jobs Austria 2014-2020: IP 1.b, M4\_FTI\_IP1b\_MN2 (Innovation Coaching and Support)

### **7. Monitoring**

We will monitor the number of companies participating / benefitting from the new tool Kickstart Digitalisation.



Place, date: St. Pölten, 2022-01-18

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