

**START EASY - Smart tools for quick and easy start up
in Europe: the once-only challenge**

Action Plan
for
Lublin Science and Technology Park

as of 26.05.2022

Lublin 2022

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Part I – General information

Project: START EASY - Smart tools for quick and easy start up in Europe: the once-only challenge

Partner organization: Lublin Science and Technology Park

Other partner organizations involved (if relevant): -

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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
Other regional development policy instrument

Name of the policy instrument(s) addressed:

- Current policy instrument addressed: European Funds for Lubelskie Voivodeship 2021-27, Priority Axis I: Scientific research and innovations, Specific Objective 1(iv): developing skills for smart specializations, industry transition and entrepreneurship

The Managing Authority of the new regional operational program (Program) – European Funds for Lubelskie 2021-2027 – has finalised the program in March 2022 and referred it to European Commission for approval. Indicatively, the Program is expected to be approved until the end of 2022. Currently, there is no specific information when the program will be launched with first calls.

Further details on the policy context and the way the action plan should contribute to improve the policy instrument are given below.

Since late 2020, Lublin Science and Technology Park (LSTP) was participating in the Thematic Working Group 1 for new regional operational program, led by the Managing Authority (Department for Regional Operational Program, Marshal's Office of Lubelskie Voivodeship). The group called "Smart Lubelskie" worked on defining new policies towards SME, R&D and ICT support for the region. As the policy instrument for 2014-2020 was at the ending phase, considerations for improvements submitted by LSTP were considered to shape the new policy instrument. As a result,

the actions planned in this document will impact the new operational program - the European Funds for Lubelskie Voivodeship 2021-27.

Hence, the learning experiences gathered during START EASY project helped shaping new activities to be implemented under the new operational program. While the previous policy instruments' focus (in particular, **Measure 3.7 Increasing competitiveness of SMEs**) aimed at breaking down barriers connected with access to finance and know-how, as well as triggering actions related to the value chain of companies, the new policy instrument operative during 2021-27 focusses on the integration of the ecosystem. It aims to create and develop more SME-oriented services towards Industry 4.0 and green economy transformation. The goal is to ensure better governance based on a comprehensive approach, focus on smart specializations and improvement of operation of innovation centers and entrepreneurship incubators. To do so, the policy instrument will also support cooperation between SMEs, academia, public and other society partners.

The changes described in the Action Plan will concern developing one-stop shop solutions and new initiatives, especially for early-stage entrepreneurs.

The planned measures will influence the new operational program objectives through:

1. Introduction of comprehensive services for entrepreneurs and startups (OSS solutions) to help them set up and run a business.
2. Development of qualified young workers and entrepreneurs in relation to regional innovation foci.

Part III – Details of the actions envisaged

ACTION 1

Name of the action: Development of new instrument – regional one-stop shop model (OSS) for SMEs in Lubelskie Voivodeship managed by Lublin Science and Technology Park.

1. Relevance to the project

During the implementation of the project, the problem of the lack of a centralized system of support for entrepreneurs in Lublin Region was identified as a major challenge in our region. In particular, the increasing demand for digitalization of business-oriented services and the need to build a resistant ecosystem for COVID related risks and future challenges became apparent. The START EASY project provided the Lublin Science and Technology Park with valuable knowledge on different one-stop shop initiatives available in other regions. It has resulted in the shaping and introduction of the new model for comprehensive services for entrepreneurs (OSS), which was not foreseen in the previous regional operational program. The introduction and implementation of the OSS is foreseen in the European Funds for Lubelskie Voivodeship 2021-27 within the Priority Axis I: Scientific research and innovations, Specific Objective 1(iv): developing skills for smart specialization, industrial transition, and entrepreneurship, and thereby demonstrates its policy impact.

Lessons learnt

Following the experiences and knowledge transfer activities, interregional learning process and involvement of regional stakeholders, we learned about important good practices from other START EASY participating regions, which served as an inspiration for this action.

In particular, the following lessons were learnt:

- **Engagement of relevant stakeholders in policy design is key to success.** As the Government of Catalonia shows, its generic one-stop shop with informational, administrative, and advisory services is a very successful European initiative, born to make business startup and operation quick and simple. This good practice presented during the 1st project study visit in Barcelona in November 2019 showed that key organizations in the region should work together to ensure the best outcome possible. Moreover, this approach to SME related services underpinned an important part of local public administration, as entrepreneurs are operating predominantly on a local level.

- **Digital is not for future, it is for now.** Also, this lesson was learnt thanks to the Government of Catalonia, but also from the good practice of Support Point for Entrepreneurs in Ghent (East Flanders), which showcased how digital capacity impacts on the competitiveness of regional businesses. The Catalan OSS is highly digitalized; yet, still there are challenges towards more effective data governance through the implementation of a once-only principle. The East Flanders' one-stop shop (Central Point of Support for entrepreneurs in Gent) was presented at the 3rd project study visit in November 2020 (in online form due to the COVID pandemic) and organized by the Economic Council of East Flanders. The one-stop shop's operator, City of Ghent, addresses similar challenges to the Catalan OSS, but at the local (city) level. The presentation provided important insights on how the OSS in Ghent moves towards digitalization of business informational and consultancy services.

- **The ecosystem should find solutions that bring added value for entrepreneurs** in order to facilitate business creation. The Business Project Office in Metropolitan City of Bologna was another inspirational good practice for the Lublin Science and Technology Park. The practice was presented during the 2nd project study visit held in Bologna in January 2020. This initiative is an example of complementary services provided to entrepreneurs, in the form of advice on how to establish a business, or where to get external funding and training.

Challenges identified

Starting from first interregional learning activities (study visits, thematic workshop) and stakeholders' engagement (regional stakeholder group meetings in Lublin Region), Lublin Science and Technology Park identified several challenges applicable for the region:

- **Need for improving regulatory policy, ecosystem relations and accessibility of the support ecosystem.** While the regulatory policy is clearly defined on the national level in Poland, there are some gaps which can be filled by regional activities. From LSTP perspective, it can be done through involvement of relevant actors to define the vision – with both public bodies and business support institutions which have a 'pull' power on regulatory policies, and SMEs and startups acting with a soft 'pull' power by defining their needs and shaping the vision of support ecosystem. That is, the inclusion of entrepreneurs in policy definition process is recommended. Moreover, to operate efficiently, regional entrepreneurship ecosystems should be well connected and communicated – on intra (actor-actor) and external (actor-SME-as-a-client) levels. This learning came from the project 1st round of consultations with regional stakeholders in Lublin Region, organized in January 2020.

- **Highly segmented sources of information addressed to entrepreneurs, investors and people interested in starting a business in the region.** There are many sources of information on starting and running a business in the region. Most of them operate as dedicated business support organizations or its units with own Internet sources, which increases their accessibility. A rich and diversified offer is good, yet the somewhat subjective segmentation and functionality they assume can be considered a weakness. It can cause 'information noise' for business clients

who are looking for a comprehensive and reliable source in the region. An alternative solution could cover a wider or more thematically unified pool of business support tools developed under relevant topics. This conclusion was based on the project 2nd round of consultations with regional stakeholders in Lublin Region, organized in August 2020 (in online form due to COVID pandemic).

- **Lack of specific standard for regional one stop shops or their types in the region, and in Europe.** This applies to the (i) complementarity with the national (Polish) one-stop shop for SMEs starting and operating business activity in Poland (biznes.gov.pl), (ii) potential areas of competencies for regional one-stop shops, e.g. basic information and advisory services for regular and innovative companies on different development levels, administrative support, (iii) relevant operating models, e.g. generic partnership network of organisations constituting one single point of contact 'under one umbrella' versus single specialist service centers in different fields (innovation services for startups and open innovation projects, early / startup and late /scale up and internationalization stages of SME development), and finally (iv) financing models to ensure sustainable operation of one-stop shops. These findings resulted from the project's 3rd round of consultations with regional stakeholders in Lublin Region, organized in July 2021 (online, due to COVID pandemic) and the 1st Interregional Thematic Workshop in Poland, organized in October 2021 (online) and summoning project partners and stakeholders from all participating regions.

- **Unmet need for external support by aspiring entrepreneurs, start-ups and companies operating on early stages of business activity in Lublin Region, i.e., information and advisory services.** Questions such as "How to establish a company?" "Which form of business activity to choose?" "Which tax rates apply?" "How to raise for external funds?" "What public support is offered for innovative companies?" "How to protect IP rights?" "How to pivot and digitalise current business model?" are just a few questions in a universe of challenges that early-stage businesses face. Thus, a systemic solution is needed, in a form of a single centre, accessible both physically and online, with a set of at least basic services customized to the needs of regional SMEs. These results stem from the project's 4th round of consultations with regional stakeholders in the Lublin Region, organized at Lublin Science and Technology Park in March 2022.

Potential solution

Based on general provisions included in the new regional operational program for 2021-27, the idea is **to create a regional one-stop-shop (OSS) as a source of information and dedicated service for SMEs** starting up or growing their business. Specifically, the first milestone for this OSS implementation is to develop an OSS framework; followed by the creation of an online portal integrating offered services, as well as the preparation of a physical site for information, consultancy, and advisory services. This idea has been inspired by the good practices showcased by Government of Catalonia, City of Ghent and Metropolitan City of Bologna.

2. Nature of the action

Aim

The overall aim is the development of a regional one-stop shop model (OSS) for SMEs in Lubelskie Voivodeship managed by Lublin Science and Technology Park. The main objective of the action is to design and develop a regional one-stop shop for SMEs and startups in Lublin Region, operating as an on-spot and online point for the provision of complex informational and transactional services, managed by Lublin Science and Technology Park. Amongst others, it should support companies in early stages with the following:

- ideation and incubation of business
- product-market fit and market entry
- growth.

The regional one-stop shop is planned to provide (i) information on basics of the business activity in Poland, (ii) generic and specialist consultancy and advisory services, (iii) access to services offered by other organizations or public bodies in the region, also related to innovation support, Industry 4.0, circular economy and other support activities for businesses, and (iv) a platform for backline support and cooperation between relevant ecosystem actors in the region.

Following aspects will constitute a set of activities needed to create a regional one-stop shop in Lublin Region, i.e. design and implementation of four functional areas:

- **Informational area** (physical one) with dedicated personnel – basic (starting a company) and innovation related information (product development, commercialization, access to funding, training and networking events etc.)
- **Service area** – specific offer to help businesses grow (business, financial, legal and IP, marketing, innovation and technology and other consultancy and advisory)
- **Co-working area** – dedicated space for early-stage companies, equipped with basic office and meeting infrastructure
- **Online portal area** – a digital solution to connect all the relevant support actors in the region, with information about own and externally offered services, innovation, technology transfer and generic business support centers

Activities planned

Implementation of the action plan to achieve the objective require the following steps:

- **Activity 1:** Analysis of the required scope of the OSS to create its framework.
- **Activity 2:** Development of a functional design for the OSS.
- **Activity 3:** Implementation of the OSS.

3. Players involved

- **Action leader / own contribution:** Lublin Science and Technology Park – the entity will act as the coordinator of the project and define the guidelines for the individual activities to be carried out
- **Action consultations / co-funding (ERDF):** Management of the Regional Operational Programme Department, Marshal's Office of Lubelskie Voivodeship – Managing Authority for Regional Operational Programme for Lubelskie Voivodeship (2014-2020); Managing Authority for European Funds for Lubelskie Voivodeship (2021-2027)
- **Action consultations / co-funding (ERDF):** Lublin Agency for Entrepreneurship Support in Lubelskie Voivodeship (LAWP) – intermediary authority for the Priority Axis I under new operational program, i.e. European Funds for Lubelskie Voivodeship 2021-27
- **Action consultations:** Economy and Entrepreneurship Support Department, Marshal's Office of the Lubelskie Voivodeship – in charge of regional policies towards SME competitiveness, RIS3, policy making and implementation, operating Business Lubelskie, a one-stop shop and network of county centers for internationalization of SMEs and investor support in the region; other thematic departments can be involved, e.g. in charge of regional strategy, digitalization etc.
- **Action consultations:** Entrepreneurs Service Center – entity of Industrial Development Agency JSC supervised by Polish Development Fund JSC, a government agency in charge of development funds and financial instruments for SMEs
- **Action consultations:** Regional Development Fund for Lubelskie Voivodeship LLC – in charge of financial instruments for SMEs in Lubelskie Voivodeship

- **Action consultations:** Strategy and Entrepreneurship Department, Lublin City Hall – in charge of local policies towards SME competitiveness, policy making and implementation
- **Other regional and local actors**, i.e. public agencies, business support organisations, but also SMEs who will be directly impacted by the new instrument will be also invited

4. Timeframe

The following development and pilot implementation process is planned:

- Activity 1: Analysis of the required scope of the OSS to create its framework - duration: 1 month, implementation date: September 2022
- Activity 2: Development of a functional requirements for the OSS - duration: 3 months, implementation date: October to December 2022
- Activity 3: Implementation – indicative duration of the project proposal development for specific call: 1 month, implementation date: January 2023 (dependent on the timeline for call announcement by the Managing Authority)

The next steps (i.e. preparation to the call) will be performed as soon as the new regional operational program for 2021-2027 will be approved by the European Commission (indicative, by the end of 2022).

5. Costs

The cost foreseen for the OSS implementation amounts to EUR 1.2 million. The implementation of the regional one-stop shop for SMEs is initially foreseen as a continuous initiative in the region, with initial budget planned under new regional operational program 2021-2027. The indicative budget is as follows:

- Creation of the OSS online portal: 60.000 EUR
- Preparation of the physical space: 40.000 EUR
- Administrative, IT, marketing operations: 250.000 EUR
- Consultancy and advisory operations: 850.000 EUR

6. Funding sources

- European Funds for Lubelskie Voivodeship 2021-2027 (ERDF)
 - Due to close cooperation of Lublin Science and Technology Park with the Managing Authority in charge of the regional operational program, general provisions were introduced to the program project. Specifically, it is introduced under the European Funds for Lubelskie Voivodeship 2021-27, Priority Axis I: Scientific research and innovations, Specific Objective 1(iv): development of capacities in the field of smart specializations, industry transformation and entrepreneurship. As the program will be approved at EU level, the Managing Authority will develop specific descriptions of the priority axes. Subsequently, a call to implement the new policy instrument will be announced.
- own contribution by Lublin Science and Technology Park: as part of ERDF support, all the beneficiaries are required to contribute own sources, which should also be the case for LSTP.

ACTION 2

Name of the action: Development of a new program to support the development of entrepreneurial and business knowledge among secondary school students.

1. Relevance to the project

During the implementation of the project, the problem of lack of knowledge and experience of the basics of entrepreneurship among young employees was identified. The participation in START EASY inspired us to implement a program to tackle this issue, funded through the resources available to the LSTP and the ongoing START EASY program.

Lessons learnt

Following the project's knowledge transfer activities and experiences, interregional learning process and involvement of regional stakeholders, several important good practices from other START EASY participating regions served as an inspiration for this action. The concrete project insights came from the 2nd study visit in Bologna (January 2020) and 3rd study visit in East Flanders (online, November 2020). Moreover, additional learning on concrete problem areas related to youth entrepreneurship stems from the project 5th and 7th round of consultations with regional stakeholders in Lublin Region (organized in April and May 2022, respectively):

- **Lack of entrepreneurial and business knowledge.** During the SME stakeholder meetings, the lack of basic business knowledge and the lack of soft skills among young that build an entrepreneurial foundation were highlighted.
- **Lack of opportunity for change in the education system.** Due to the level of complexity of the education system, there is no possibility to implement a change in entrepreneurship education. This change would require too much labor and capital, and the effect might not be as expected due to possible transformation of assumptions. This issue has also been noted in good practices from Italy ("Co-Start" incubator in Villa Garagnani) and Spain (Accio Investment Forum).

Importantly, LSTP has the capacity to offer the program in an interesting format. Due to the ongoing START EASY project, we had the opportunity to learn about entrepreneurship education support programs. Considering its experience in business support and cooperating institutions, LSTP has the possibility to implement a program that will contribute to the development of young people from the Lubelskie Voivodeship. This approach has also been inspired by good practices presented from Belgium (Promoting entrepreneurship through supporting business programs for students during school education) and Italy ("Insieme per il lavoro" - Together for work).

Challenges identified

Starting from first interregional learning activities (study visits, thematic workshop) and stakeholder engagement (regional stakeholder group meetings in Lublin Region), the Lublin Science and Technology Park identified several challenges applicable for the region:

- **The implementation of the program** is a task that requires good planning so that schools are willing and able to participate. Therefore, the program must not be a heavy burden for students and teachers, and hence, must have an attractive formula. This learning experience stems from the project 7th round of consultations with regional stakeholders in Lublin Region, organized in May 2022.
- Because of the **need to involve students and teachers in the program**, the LSTP needs to undertake extensive outreach activities to inform people about the project and its benefits. This learning experience stems from the project 7th round of consultations with regional stakeholders in Lublin Region, organized in May 2022.
- Assuming **that the programmes will be coordinated in schools by teachers**, the final involvement of schools in the program and the recruitment of students will depend on the respective schools. During the stakeholder meeting, it was repeatedly stressed that it is often the low level of involvement of teachers in education and extra-curricular activities that determines the insufficient level of knowledge in this area among young people. This

learning experience stems from the project 7th round of consultations with regional stakeholders in Lublin Region, organized in May 2022.

Potential solution

Due to the lack of opportunities to bring about general changes to the education system, it is necessary to take own initiatives of non-formal education character. For this reason, LSTP will implement a project aimed at broadening entrepreneurial knowledge and teaching new skills to young people.

2. Nature of the action

Aim

The main aim of this action is the development and implementation of an educational programme on business knowledge and entrepreneurial attitudes. The main objective of the task is (I) to develop a programme for schools in the Lublin region, (II) to implement a cyclical programme in the activities of LSTP, the programme is to be a flagship example of youth support in this area. The building blocks of the program include:

- Students as target group.
- The project will be piloted starting from September 2022, and indicatively end by February 2023 (final arrangements will be done in cooperation with relevant stakeholders and teachers, Lublin Youth City Council, other youth organizations and stakeholders).
- One project will comprise different events such as: entrepreneurship workshops (expected topics: legal and accounting aspects starting own company in practice, market research in terms of ideas for own business, marketing and promotion in a newly established company), a meeting with an entrepreneur, a competition for the best business idea (expected topics: development of Business Model Canvas - a competition in the form of one-day workshops, several hours of team work and presentation of the idea in front of the commission, development of business plan - a competition in the form of one-day workshops, several weeks of own work and presentation of the idea in front of the commission).

To implement the project, it will be necessary to involve the LSTP staff and partners, who expressed their willingness to support in terms of e.g., providing speakers for the workshops during the stakeholder meetings.

Activities planned

Implementation of the action plan to achieve the objective require the following steps:

- Activity 1: Create a team for the action and agree on members' responsibilities.
- Activity 2: Develop the final project version and consult it with schools and other stakeholders.
- Activity 3: Implement information activities to disseminate knowledge about the planned project.
- Activity 4: Implement the educational project.

3. Players involved

- **Action leader / own contribution:** Lublin Science and Technology Park – the entity will act as the coordinator of the project and define the guidelines for the individual activities to be carried out

- **Secondary schools from the region of Lublin** (students and teachers) - these entities will be the main beneficiaries of the project, but they will also have an impact on the project appearance
- **Other regional and local actors**, i.e., local education authorities, City labour Office, Lublin City Hall, Lublin Youth City Council, SMEs cooperating with LSTP

4. Timeframe

The following development and pilot implementation process is planned:

- Creation of a team for the action and agreeing on member responsibilities: 1 month, implementation date: July 2022.
- Development of the final project version and its consultation with schools - duration time: 1 month, implementation date: August 2022.
- Implementation of information activities to disseminate knowledge about the planned project - duration time: 2 months, implementation date: August-September 2022.
- Implement the developed educational project - duration time: 1 month, implementation date: September to February 2022 (indicatively; final timeframe will be agreed under consultations of the project with stakeholders).

5. Costs

The indicative cost amounts to EUR 5.000. The indicative budget is as follows:

- purchase of attractive prizes in the competition: 5.000 EUR

6. Funding sources

The budget will come from LSTP's own resources and from sponsors.

Date: 2022 -07- 26

Signature: 
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