



iEER

Boosting Innovative Entrepreneurship ecosystems in Regions for young entrepreneurs

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Supplement the Action Plan for the West Pomerania

Szczecin, September 2022



1. Background

Westpomeranian Region aspires to become a leader of blue and green growth ensuring high quality of life. A modern and diversified economy making use of geographical location and natural resources along with the development of innovative ideas shall attract entities operating in the field of R&D&I. It's important to focus on building an innovation-orientated society, open to new ideas with the ability to face future challenges. We believe that growth is not a goal itself, the most important is to create and promote a place where people will have a chance to carry out their ideas, have an excellent education and lead a happy life in a safe and clean environment. That is why we aim to build an ecosystem supporting the development of the entrepreneurial and innovation capacity of the region through rising social awareness and by shaping entrepreneurial and pro-innovative attitudes from the first years of education till late retirement.

This document is a supplement to "The Action Plan for West Pomerania" adopted at the midterm iEER conference, held on 22 - 23 March 2018 in Brussels. "The Action Plan for West Pomerania" was one of the studies which closed stage 1 and defined the action plan for the support of entrepreneurship in the region.

In the years 2016-2018, the participants in the iEER project exchanged good practices, knowledge and experience in order to determine how to develop effective measures and regional strategies with a view to streamlining regional entrepreneurship ecosystems through quad-helix-based cooperation between universities, the private and public sectors, and target users in the partner regions. A key element of the project was learning camps, where project partners study the best practices of a region and brainstorm in workshops to identify what makes or breaks a budding business. In addition to learning camps, peer reviews formed an important part of the learning process. Peer reviews provided an outside perspective to the region and the received feedback is a valuable tool in improving the local ecosystems. Findings of the first phase were compiled into regional action plans and into an iEER Boost Growth Handbook.

In 2018-2020 iEER moved from learning to implementation. Regional action plans were put into practice and their progress has been closely monitored. The results and lessons learned from the implementation of the action plans were collected into a policy recommendation in 2019.

The third phase of iEER involved the preparation of an analysis of the state of the regional business ecosystem and three Interregional Learning Events dedicated to discussion about the new needs resulting from the slowing economy and those highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. Key findings from gap analysis

The ongoing socio-economic transformation of West Pomerania is aimed at increasing the role and importance of the knowledge and innovation factor, as key drivers for the future development of entrepreneurship in the region. It is equally important to eliminate the economic consequences of the pandemic. The lockdown of economies to limit the spread of the coronavirus has undoubtedly wide economic and social effects. The closure and lack of revenues in many companies in the production and service industries, and at the same time incurring high fixed costs, triggered layoffs.

In West Pomerania quick response was a political strategy and actions to maintain the liquidity of companies in a pandemic and to maintain jobs called – The Westpomeranian Anti-Crisis Package. The offer for entrepreneurs suffering from the COVID-19 pandemic focused mainly on liquidity loans and subsidies for maintaining jobs and non-repayable grants for financing working capital. These funds made it possible to cover the costs of day-to-day operations of enterprises and were settled in a simplified manner. Support from the regional level was directed to SMEs, while medium-sized companies were able to apply for aid at the national level. The package was implemented thanks to the flexible approach of the European Commission to spending EU funds on counteracting the effects of COVID-19. The region has also prepared various solutions for entities that have already benefited from one of the regional funds (Regional Operational Program, JEREMIE 1, JESSICA and JEREMIE 2), however, they had difficulties in meeting their project obligations due to COVID-19. Further activities were related to the proposals of the West Pomerania to the National Recovery Plan which concerned, inter alia, the rebuilding of the educational capital by shaping the basic, transversal and professional skills of children, young people and adult learners and digitisation. Many institutions have switched to remote work to continue supporting start-ups and entrepreneurship in the Region and the provision of services, including incubation, in a remote form, as well as meetings and conferences aimed at supporting the formation of relationships between different actors, and networking. One of the entities created a support package for companies in the form of a panel of experts responding to the problems of entrepreneurs during the pandemic - legal, economic, tax, financial, and management-related advice. Despite the creation of many forms of support, the regional ecosystem suffered during COVID-19. Stakeholders most frequently report the following weaknesses of the regional ecosystem and threats:

- Uncertainty about the future situation, resulting in the abandonment or postponement of new business ventures, especially visible in the case of start-ups at an early stage of operation;
- Moderately effective cooperation of science, industry and business: difficulties in understanding mutual needs, often not perceiving the university as a partner in the innovation process;
- Insufficient level of innovation culture in enterprises, low social acceptance for experimenting and innovative attitudes, low awareness in terms of the importance of innovation for intelligent balancing the economy;
- Unsatisfactory level of digital competencies;
- Insufficient availability of incubation infrastructure for young companies and startups.

3. List of actions improving addressed policy

Results of the third phase of the iEER project will have a direct impact on the implementation of the Economic Policy of the West Pomerania Region by modifying its activities planned for 2022-2023 and ultimately to the creation of new systemic measures financed under the European Funds for West Pomerania 2021-2027¹.

¹ European Funds for West Pomerania 2021-2027 (FEPZ 2021-2027) is a strategic document at the regional level, which serves to implement the vision and development objectives of the region, contained in the Development Strategy for Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship until 2030 and is one of the most important instruments of regional policy. The assumed aim of the Programme's intervention is to support those undertakings which will contribute most at the level of

Although the Economic Policy of the West Pomerania Region is very general in nature, has a direct impact on the shape of the operation and implementation programs and the way of spending funds.

Action 1.

Update the Economic Policy to take into account the lessons learned from the 3rd phase of the iEER project

The Economic Policy acts as a signpost outlining the main directions of social and economic activity in the Region. The assumptions contained in the document determine the course to achieve the goals of the Westpomeranian Region Development Strategy. The Economic Policy was drafted and approved in 2021 after the completion of the first two phases of iEER. The evaluation of the document is conducted on an ongoing basis once a year and the content is updated every two years. The document is valid until revoked.

The Region will use the results of the GAP analysis and the lessons learned from the 3rd phase of the iEER project to update the document and refine the activities for ecosystem development in four areas:

- Objective I: Sustainable Social and Economic Development 1.3. Stimulating creative, entrepreneurial and innovative attitudes
- Objective II: Strengthening Competitiveness of Enterprises 2.4. Support for companies in the beginning stage of development
- Objective III: Improving Strategic Economic Development Management 3.1 Strengthening the impact of EU funds and financial instruments
- Objective III: 3.3 Strengthening inter-regional cooperation

The existing, rather general descriptions will be replaced by specific indications and areas identified for support by the Region.

Timeframe: An update of the Economic Policy will take place in April 2023.

Funding: not applicable

Expected impacts (KPI)

KPI 1: Number of updated documents

Action 2.

Improvement of the tools for the development of the regional innovation system and strengthening the process based on RIS3 WZ and smart specializations

In order to achieve the objective mentioned in chapter 1, the Region will use the lessons learned from the 3rd phase of the iEER project to improve 8 own tasks which will be implemented in 2022 and 2023:

regional cohesion policy to the achievement of the objectives set out in the EU's European Green Deal strategy, whose main objective is to transform the EU into a just and prosperous society living in a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy achieving zero net greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.



These tools for the development of an entrepreneurial ecosystem, have been created on the basis of the experiences of phases 1 and 2 of iEER. They are currently in the middle of their implementation period and will be modified in order to better respond to the needs identified by the stakeholders participating in the survey constituting the GAP analysis preparation process. They will also be enriched with the issues addressed in the iEER phase 3 Learning Events. This is particularly the case for those tools targeting SMEs, start-ups and business environment institutions i.e.:

- *Hackathon* targeting start-ups, entrepreneurs and students;
- *Academic Fridays – Science Port Academic* targeting teachers;
- *Innovative Educational Platform* targeting teachers;
- *Startup shot* targeting start-ups, entrepreneurs, companies and BEI.
- *Startup Guide* Startups targeting start-ups, entrepreneurs, youth and BEI.

Timeframe: Improvement of the tools occurs successively as each is implemented as a mini-project. In March/April 2023 there will be a mid-term evaluation related to the update of the Economic Policy and the preparation of the “State of the West Pomeranian Region Report for 2022” for the West Pomeranian Regional Assembly. The Regional Assembly is the decision-making and controlling body of the local government. In June/August full evaluation of the actions and their continuation under the new operational programme (European Funds for Western Pomerania 2021-2027) will be decided.

Funding: This action will be undertaken within the budgets that the Region currently has available and as part of a project financed by the European Regional Development Fund under the Regional Operational Programme of the West Pomeranian Voivodeship 2014-2020.

Expected impacts (KPI)

- KPI 1: number of participants
- KPI 2: number of ideas/projects selected for further implementation

Action 3.

Initiating new projects

The Region will support the implementation of new own projects and joint projects of companies and business environment institutions. The change achieved thanks to the iEER project will mainly concern the Region's own

projects, which will be created based on the good practice of other partners. These projects will be created using the knowledge and experience of the iEER project partners.

By making extensive use of funds available inter alia under Interreg Europa, Horizon Europe, Creative Europe or the Project Support Facility of the Council of Baltic Sea States, the Region will build up good relations and create a positive atmosphere for exchanging experiences with other regions in order to ensure the effective development of the entrepreneurial ecosystem. The planned activities will concern three smart specialisations, i.e. Technologies and Services of the Future; Blue Economy and Green Transport; Tourism and Quality of Life.

The case of the three remaining specialisations i.e. Smart Manufacturing of Products and Machines, Chemical Products for Sustainable Development, and New Generation of Natural Processing Region will support stakeholder participation in international initiatives for the development of the European ecosystem. The support may for example take the form of knowledge transfer, the provision of complementary training and, in certain cases, the funds for own contribution.

Timeframe: 2022-2023 (preparation of the application)

Funding: Region’s own resources

Expected impacts (KPI)

KPI 1: number of ideas/projects selected for further implementation

Endorsement

The Westpomeranian Region herewith agrees to support and promote the implementation the actions detailed above. I confirm that I have the required authority of my organisation to do so.	
Date:	07. 10. 2022
	Olgierd Geblewicz, Marshal of the Westpomeranian Region
Signature:	MARSZAŁEK WOJEWÓDZTWA <i>Olgierd Geblewicz</i>
Stamp of the organisation:	WOJEWÓDZTWO ZACHODNIOPOMORSKIE ul. Korsarzy 34 70-540 Szczecin NIP 851-28-71-498