



# Innova-FI

Interreg Europe



European Union  
European Regional  
Development Fund

REPORT EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCE #08

22-24.11.2022, Bielsko-Biała



## 1. Introduction

The current deliverable “Report of the activities taken place during 10th Exchange of Experience of Innova-FI” was developed in the frame of the European project “Financial Instruments for Innovation – Innova-FI”, funded by Interreg Europe.

During the 10th Exchange of Experience of Innova-FI, that was organized by the Polish INNOVA-FI partner, Regional Development Agency (ARRSA) in Bielsko-Biała, Poland, partners participated in a conference where national, regional and local levels of entrepreneurship support through financial instruments in Poland were presented as well as benchmarking workshop in terms of post-covid financial measures took place.

The three-day event was held on the 22nd to 24th of November 2022 in the premises of Beskid Technology Incubator owned by ARRSA. Also, a study visit was organised to FabLab Bielsko-Biała, fabrication laboratory and creative and innovative space equipped with cutting-edge technologies that is run by ARRSA since 2014 and to Cavatina Hall, European scale unique concert hall.

ARRSA from the beginning agreed that the meeting will be organized in a hybrid formula with the possibility of on-line participation. Due to the unstable situation related to Russian Ukrainian war, LP had to cancelled its travel on last minute. Also, some of the speakers at a day 1 conference were participating on-line.

The event was attended in total by 24 participants, including project partners and stakeholders.

## 2. Session minutes

### Day 1: Tuesday 22.11.2022

On the first day of the event ARRSA organized a conference related to post-Covid support for economic recovery as well as in terms of facilitating innovation processes through financial instruments.

The conference was opened with welcoming words of Mr. Mariusz Kłusak, Vice-president of ARRSA and Mr. Jan Sienkiewicz, Proxy and Director of International Projects Department.

Afterwards, representatives of the institutions from local, regional and national level presented their forms of support:

1. ***Financial Instruments for SMEs provided by Entrepreneurship Support Fund***, Aleksandra Chrystowska O'Shea, Entrepreneurship Support Fund, ARRSA

Aleksandra Chrystowska O'Shea present the origins of Entrepreneurship Support Fund, that is a department of ARRSA that was created through merge of Bielski Fundusz Projektów Kapitałowych (Bielski Capital Projects Fund) – BFPK and ARRSA in 2020. Currently its main operations are related to: loan and guarantee fund, Beskid Technology Accelerator as well as other tools like advisory, applications, projects.

The main scope of the presentation was to demonstrate the post-covid support via liquidity loan. ARRSA participated in a call for intermediary bodies launched by BGK with a program of mitigation of the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, funded from the Polish Smart Growth Operational Programme (POIR) and the REACT-EU fund established by European Union.

ARRSA created a consortium of 9 local institutions with total budget of 49 M PLN (10,6 M EURO) that was distributed to 57 beneficiaries in the form of loans (from 149 applications that were submitted for the total amount of ca. 151 M PLN (over 34 M PLN).

At the second part of the speech Ms. O'Shea presented Beskid Technology Accelerator Seed Capital Fund operated by ARRSA with a value of fund ca. 15 M

PLN 3,5 M EURO) offering the support for innovative undertakings through equity type investment.

The presentation is an Annex nr 1 to the report. (file: *Prez nr 1\_ARRSA.pptx*)

2. **Regional financial instruments to support pandemic mitigation efforts**, Aleksandra Kalafarska, Deputy Director of Development and Regional Transformation Department, Marshal Office of Silesia Voivodeship

Due to the last-minute formal issues, delegation from the unit related to financial instruments management at Marshal Office of Silesia Voivodeship wasn't able to take part in the Innova-Fi conference and make their presentation. However, Mrs. Kalafarska has prepared her presentation and shared with ARRSA. In the presentation there are information about overall implementation of financial instruments in Silesia Voivodeship in the 2014-2020 programming period as well as about specific measures related to support COVID-19 pandemic mitigation efforts. The total amount of ESIF EU budget for Poland was ca. 91 BN EUR (which was the highest value in EU). On the regional level for ROP Silesia there was a total budget of ca. 3.51 BN EUR allocated. Within it, financial instruments were implemented under 3 investment priorities on a total value of 146,9 MLN EUR.

FIs under ROP Silesia were used to:

- support the creation and expansion of advanced capabilities in the field of product and service development
- Self-employment entrepreneurship and business creation, including innovative micro, small and medium-sized enterprises
- Support the physical, economic and social regeneration of deprived communities and urban and rural areas

FIs in were implemented through EIF Fund of Funds (measure 3.4 Capitalization of external sources of entrepreneurship co-financing) and EIB Fund of Funds (measure 7.5 Support persons willing to start their own economic activity through FI; 10.4 Improving condition of urban environment) in a form of loans.

In response to COVID-19 the Silesian Package for the Economy was created. Measure 3.4 were adjusted to answer the pandemic needs i.e. loans only for

working capital, possible of extension of investment & grace period, possible changes in repayment schedule etc.

Under ROP Silesia 2014-2020 under 3.4 measure total number of 1015 loans were granted for the value of over 128 MLN EUR in signed loans and a value of over 122 MLN EUR of disbursed loans.

The presentation is an Annex nr 2 to the report. (file: *(Prez 2) Marshal Office*)

3. ***Startup Ecosystem in Bielsko-Biala and Podbeskidzie Subregion***, Wojciech Bachta, CEO of Startup Podbeskidzie Foundation and DaVinci Studio Software House

Mr. Bachta provide audience with information about regional startup ecosystem and operations of Startup Podbeskidzie Foundation. The foundation was created to give a complex support to the local innovators through different events and initiatives where practitioners share their experience in terms of business creation, educate in terms of possible funding opportunities for new businesses or communication and marketing related issues. Foundation also runs a coworking place where there is not only a possibility to rent a desk but also use a bunch of mentoring or consultation services and trainings. On the second part of his speech, Mr. Bachta shared the results of recently created report about startup ecosystem and IT sector in Podbeskidzie subregion. The results of the report concerning different issues like legal forms of the companies, profitability, maturity, gender ratio, number of employees etc may be found in a presentation that is an annex nr 3 to this report (file: *Prez nr 2\_S&IT report ENG*)

4. ***Post-COVID financial support for SMEs offered by Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego***, Przemysław Lewandowski, Team Manager, Regional projects Team III, Department of Financial Instruments

In the following presentation Mr. Lewandowski, shared information about BGK and its portfolio of FIs with the special emphasis on the post-covid economic recovery.

BGK is a development bank, the only such in Poland – it supports and encourages the sustainable social and economic development of Poland.

BGK provides FIs in three implementation models: as a direct lender, private + public funds portfolio and public funds portfolio. It offers FIs in the form of loans and equity through 22 programs on regional, transregional and national levels.

As a response to COVID-19, BGK provides some changes in its portfolio to adjust it to new circumstances, just to mention: additional grace periods and credit holidays, lower interest rates. It also launched new products on the market like Smart Growth Liquidity Loan or regional (semi) liquidity loans.

The presentation is an Annex 4 to the report. (file: *Prez nr 3 BGK final*)

5. ***Supporting innovation & entrepreneurship mechanisms offered by Katowicka Special Economic Zone***, Piotr Sikora, Katowicka Special Economic Zone

The penultimate presentation was provided by Mr. Sikora who is a representative of Katowicka Special Economic Zone (KSSE). He explained the practicalities of functioning of the special economic zone in Poland and main figures about KSSE:

Nr 1 in Europe according to Financial Times

90K work places

9.7 BLN EUR investments

540 companies

+800 investment projects

He also shared information about the investment sources and main sectors operating in the zone and the incentives for companies registered there.

On the second part of the speech Mr. Sikora was talking about project called KSSNON (value ca. 8.65 MLN EUR), which will be a business accelerator with main goals of supporting innovation and development of companies through offer of preferential lease of new offices and also acceleration program, business support services, networking and facilitating cooperation.

The presentation is an Annex 5 to the report (file: *Prez nr 4 KSEZ general kssenon*)

6. **Regional Smart Specialization Strategy in Silesia**, Monika Ptak, Head of Regional Innovation Strategy Office, Development and Regional Transformation Department, Marshal Office of Silesia Voivodeship

The last presentation of the day was about innovation strategy on regional level and was conducted by Mrs. Monika Ptak from Marshal Office of Silesia Voivodeship.

Regional Innovation Strategy of the Silesia Voivodeship integrates the inner potential in the field of innovation policy, gives direction development indicates key and competitive areas height: smart specializations in the process of entrepreneurial discovery. Three main Strategic provisions are: Green Silesia, Silesia as a region of responsible transformation. & Smart Silesia.

Smart specialisations of Silesia Voivodeship are: enery, ICT, medicine, green economy & emerging industries.

The presentation is an Annex 6 to the report (file: *Prez nr 5\_RIS ENG*)

On the second part of Day 1 ARRSA provided two study visits:

- (1) FabLab Bielsko-Biała – that is a fabrication laboratory, creative space run by ARRSA since 2014. It is equipped with cutting edge technologies from the area of Industry 4.0 technologies. Innova-Fi partners visited the place and were able to touch the technology i.e. 3D printers, microcontrollers, 3D scanner, robotic arms etc. Patrycja Węgrzyn and Jan Sienkiewicz from ARRSA also presented main goals of operating such places like FabLab. They also talked about other than financial support that ARRSA for innovative ideas, startups and companies who wants develop.
- (2) Cavtina Hall – new concert hall and A-class business spaces in Bielsko-Biała. Innova-Fi guests were able to visit main concert hall, that unique on European scale due to its acoustic parameters.

At the end of the day a common dinner with partners and stakeholders.

## Day 2: Wednesday 23.11.2022

On the second day of Exchange of Experience held in Bielsko-Biala, Innova-Fi partners and stakeholders took part in a benchmarking workshop prepared and facilitated by ARRSA.

Participants were divided into groups (mixed among the partners). Each group had a specific role – as described below in the scenario of the workshop – either FIs beneficiaries or the institutions implementing FIs.

Firstly, each partner presented case studies described in the latest Innova-Fi Policy Booklet and based on the information given, groups were discussing the pros & cons, friendliness or risks of certain financial instruments, looking from the perspective of the two roles given at the beginning.

### **Benchmarking Workshop Scenario**

*Division into groups:*

#### **Group type 1**

##### **Entrepreneurs – Financial instruments beneficiaries**

People in this group will take a role of entrepreneurs and will try to look on the presented FI from the beneficiary's perspective.

Their goal is to indicate if presented FI are useful and user friendly, what is good and what is bad about them, is everything clear in terms of applying, reporting and repaying? Are they really an answer for the post-covid problems? Are they tailored to the post-covid problems? Any suggestions for improvements (form the client's perspective)

#### **Group type 2**

**Financial Instruments Owners – institutions that are designing FIs and implementing**



People in this group will take a role of FI owners or intermediaries – institutions that are designing and implementing FI.

Their goal is to indicate if presented FI are easy to implement? Are they designed properly? Is the evaluation process clear? Are the selection criteria transparent?

## **Part 1**

### **Presentations 6 x 15 min = 90 min**

Each partner has 15 min to present Financial Instrument from the Innova-Fi policy booklet

Presentations lineup:

KEPA

ANI (on-line)

FRIULI

GODC (on-line)

INVEGA

ARRSA

5 min break

## **Part 2**

### **GROUP WORK 40 min**

**Each group discuss the FIs in relation to each group and to the sample questions:**

**Group 1 Entrepreneurs** - try to look on the presented FI from the beneficiary's perspective

- if presented FI are useful and user friendly,

- what is good and what is bad about them (Pros & Cons)
- is everything clear in terms of applying, reporting and repaying?
- Are they really an answer for the post-covid problems?
- Are they tailored to the post-covid problems?
- Any suggestions for improvements (from the client's perspective)

### **Group 2 Institutions implementing FIs**

- if presented FI are easy to implement?
- Are they designed properly?
- Is the evaluation process clear?
- Are the selection criteria transparent?

### **Presentation of roundtable discussion – 15 min**

After group work each team will present the result of the discussion

Pros & Cons of each FI

And answering the question above dedicate for each group

RANK with the criteria:

1. For entrepreneurs – user friendly
2. For FI designers – transfer potential

15 min Break

### **Part 3**

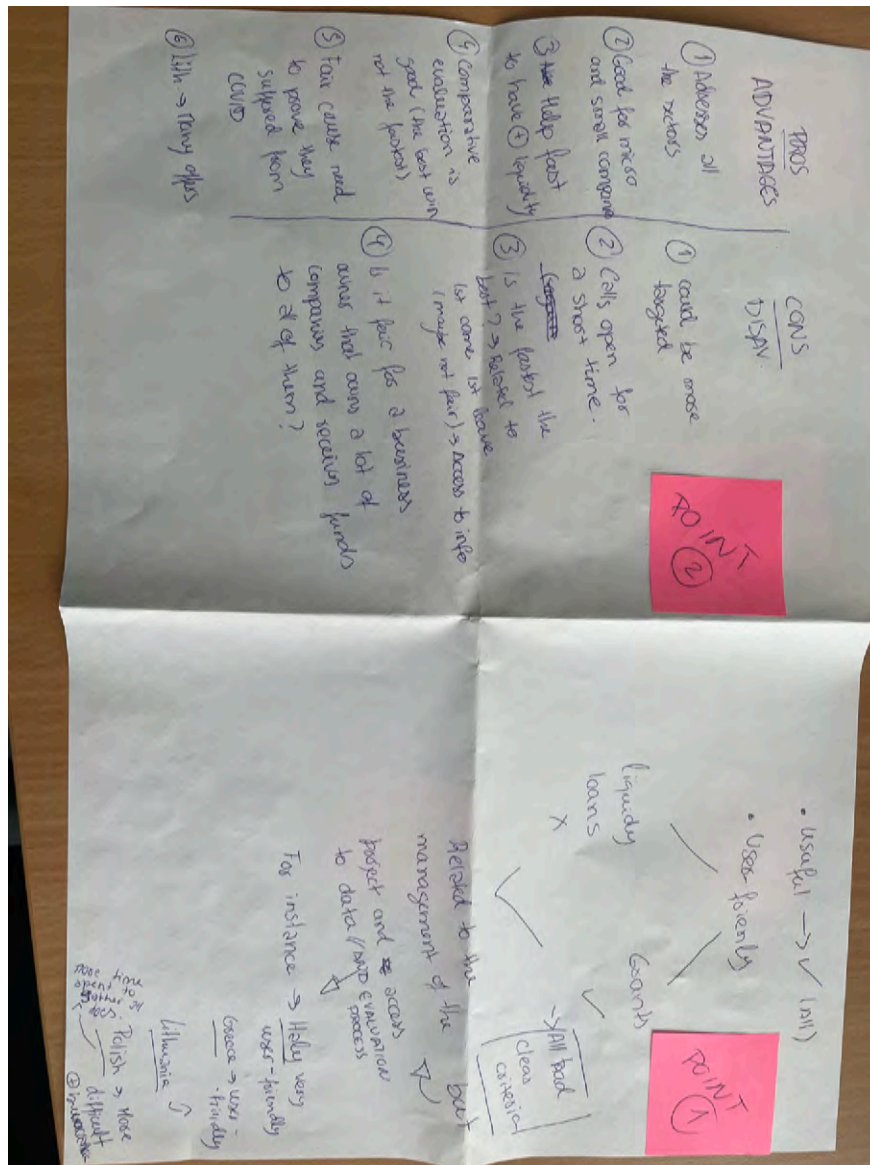
**GROUP WORK 20 min + PRESENTATION 10 min**

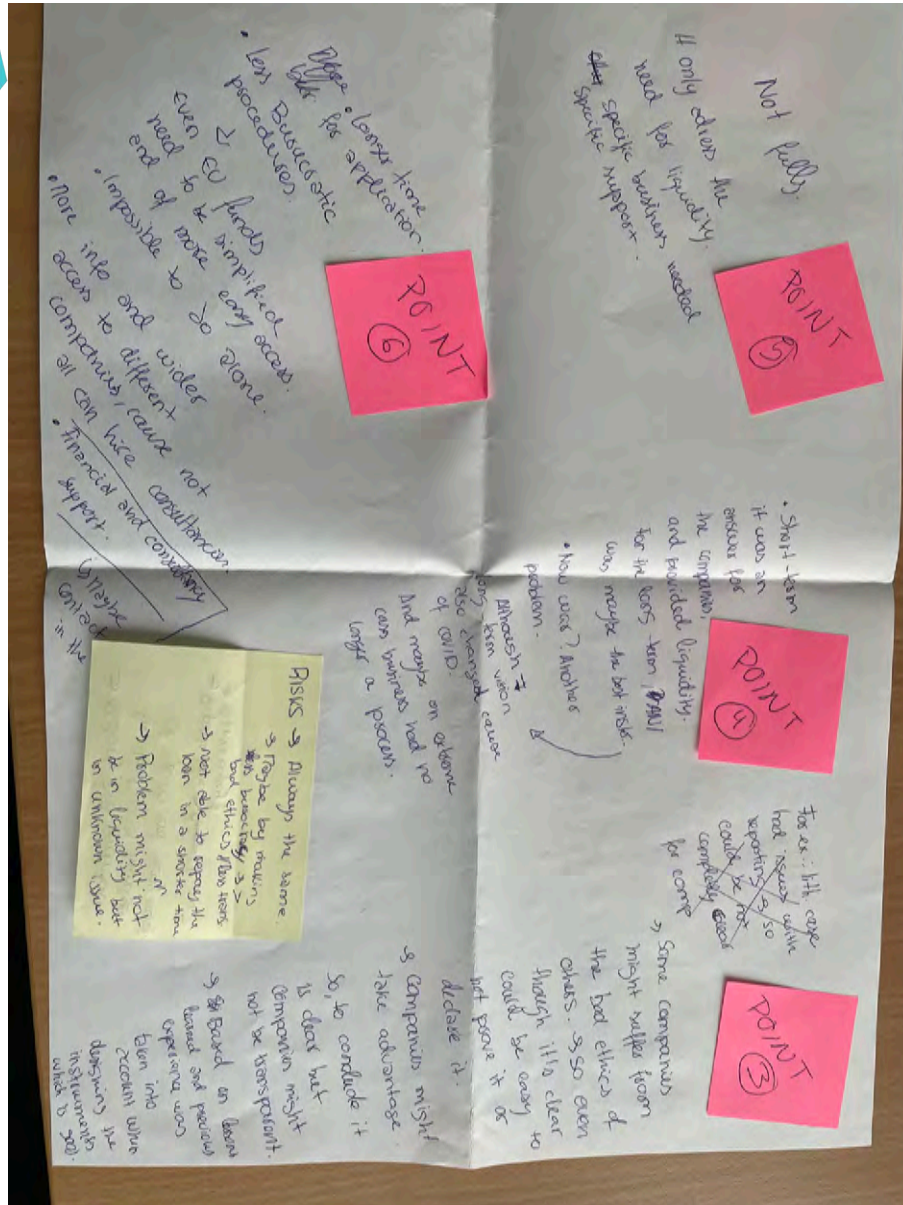
Based on own experience & on the presentation of Innova-Fi case studies:

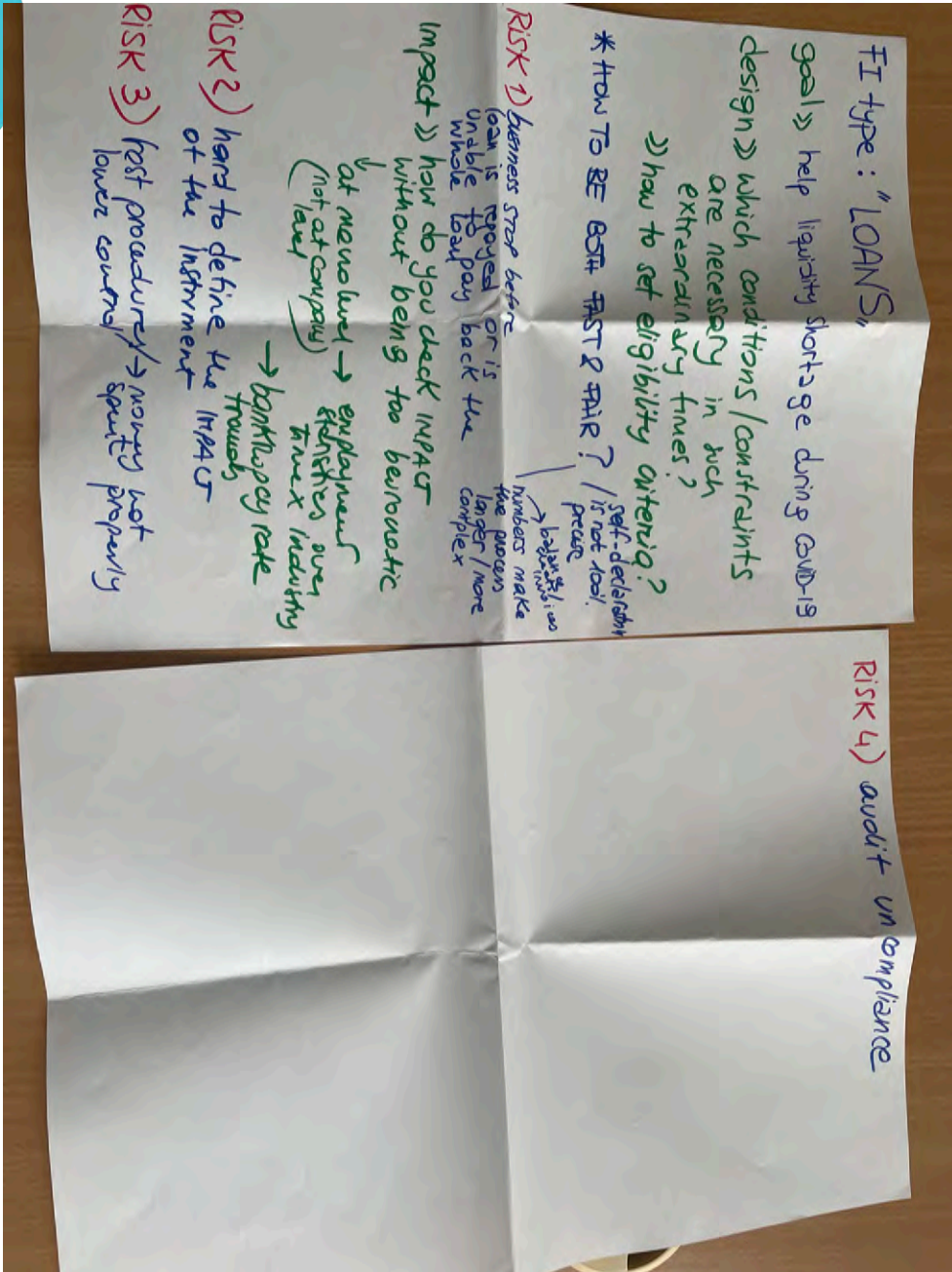
Identify the risks – based on the expectations indicated by entrepreneurs

Risk mitigation – try to find the propositions of actions to minimize the risk

The result of the workshop and groups ideas are shown on the pictures below.







### **Action Plan implementation status quo**

On the second part of the Exchange of Experience Day 2 each partner presented the status quo of the Innova-Fi action Plan implementation

#### **PRESENTATION 60 min**

Each partner present in max. 10 min the results of the implementation of AP

### Day 3: Thursday 24.11.2022

On the third day of 10<sup>th</sup> Innova-Fi Exchange of Experience the Steering Committee meeting was held.

It was meeting was conducted by the Lead Partner. Mostly issues related to finalization of the project implementation were discussed in terms of final reporting, respective deadlines and partners obligations.

Also, the dates of final event to be held on Azores were tentatively agreed on 8 and 9 February 2023.

## Consortium Innova-Fi

