

**InnoBridge –
Bridging the innovation gap
through converting R&D results into
commercial success
in a more effective and efficient way
Action Plan for Lower Austria by**

Partner organisation	Amt der NÖ Landesregierung, WST3
Other partner organisations involved (if relevant)	Technologie- und Innovationspartner TIP NÖ (member of the regional Steering Group)
Country	Austria
NUTS2 region	Lower Austria
Contact person	Martina Ebner / Kerstin Koren / Raimund Mitterbauer
email address	martina.ebner@noel.gv.at , kerstin.koren@noel.gv.at , raimund.mitterbauer@wknoe.at
phone number	+43 (2742) 9005 16111, +43 (2742) 9005 16165, +43 (2742) 851 16630

[FINAL VERSION]

[4. July 2019]



Content

1. Policy context	4
1.1 Aim of the Action Plan.....	4
2. Lower Austrian state aid scheme „Research and Development – R&D”	5
2.1 SWOT Analysis	5
2.1.1 Brief description of the state aid scheme	5
2.1.2 SWOT Analysis.....	6
2.2 Action 1: Feeding companies with new ideas for R&D activities stemming from Open Innovation Platforms	8
2.2.1 The Background.....	8
2.2.2 Action.....	10
2.2.3 Players involved.....	18
2.2.4 Timeframe.....	19
2.2.5 Costs	21
2.2.6 Funding sources	21
2.2.7 Monitoring indicators for action implementation	22
3. Technology and Innovation Partner Lower Austria (TIP Lower Austria).....	23
3.1 SWOT Analysis	23
3.2 Action 2: R&D&I Portfolio for SMEs – creating sustainable impact on SMEs’ innovation activities and the commercialisation of R&D results.....	26
3.2.1 The Background.....	26
3.2.2 Action.....	27
3.2.3 Players involved.....	30
3.2.4 Timeframe.....	30
3.2.5 Costs	31



LAND
NIEDERÖSTERREICH

InnoBridge
Interreg Europe



European Union
European Regional
Development Fund

3.2.6	Funding sources	31
3.2.7	Monitoring indicators for action implementation	32
4.	Signature	32

1. Policy context

1.1 Aim of the Action Plan

The Action Plan aims to impact:

- Investment for Growth and Jobs programme
- European Territorial Cooperation programme
- Other regional development policy instrument

Name of the policy instrument addressed:

ERDF Programme Investment in Growth and Jobs Austria 2014-2020, Investment Priority 1(b) R&I Investments/Synergies.

Within the addressed policy instrument Lower Austria is focussing on specific parts of two measures:

- Measure 1: M3_FTI_IP1b_MN1 Betriebliche F&E und Technologietransferprojekte“ (Business R&D and Technology Transfer Projects),
Lower Austrian state aid scheme „Research and Development – R&D“ as part of this measure
- Measure 2: M4_FTI_IP1b_MN2: Innovationsberatung und -förderung“ (Innovation Coaching and Support), Technology and Innovation,
Technology and Innovation Partner Lower Austria (TIP Lower Austria) as part of this measure

For both parts, the state aid scheme „Research and Development – R&D“ and the Technology and Innovation Partner Lower Austria (TIP Lower Austria) a Peer Review (PR) was carried out as part of the interregional learning process. The results of the two SWOT analyses are summarised in chapters 2.1 and 3.1. The detailed PR results are available in a separate project internal document.

For each measure one action is elaborated and described under chapters 2.2 and 3.2.

2. Lower Austrian state aid scheme „Research and Development – R&D”

2.1 SWOT Analysis

Peer Review process including SWOT analysis of the above mentioned measure and in particular the state aid scheme R&D was carried out as part of the interregional learning process in the first year of InnoBridge. The Peer Review workshop took place as part of the Interregional Learning Workshop 2 mid of September 2016 in Sofia. As preparation Lower Austria has provided relevant information about the addressed policy instrument and related measure in written form for all InnoBridge partners by filling in the respective template for these Peer Reviews. More information about the applied Peer Review methodology is available in the “Peer Review Guideline InnoBridge”. The full documentation of Lower Austria’s Peer Review workshop is available as internal, full documentation paper.

The findings of the Peer Review process regarding the addressed policy instrument are a very important contribution of the interregional learning process to the elaboration of this Action Plan.

2.1.1 Brief description of the state aid scheme R&D

The aim of this funding programme is to support Lower Austrian companies in their R&D activities mainly in the field of the experimental development with high focus on market entrance.

The R&D program comprises several state aid schemes as follows:

- R&D funding – experimental development incl. development of prototypes
Support is provided for Lower Austrian companies in the field of the development of new products, new services and new processes. The support is carried out in form of a grant; the cash equivalent is regarding the General Block Exemption Regulation (GBER) of the European Commission. There are no thresholds neither for the total project costs nor for the maximum grant.
The funding rate is between 25% (for large enterprises) and 45% (for small enterprises). In case of a collaborative project the funding rate is increased by 15% points.
- R&D funding – technical and economic feasibility studies
Studies are only eligible in case they are carried out as preparation of a concrete R&D project in order to verify the market relevance or the technical feasibility.
Both feasibility studies are funded by 50% up to max. 30,000 Euro for a technical and max 20,000 Euro for an economic feasibility study.

2.1.2 SWOT Analysis

<p>STRENGTHS</p> <p>S1 Grant</p> <p>S2 No limit with regard to the amount of the grant</p> <p>S3 Quick feedback through pre check of the project idea</p> <p>S4 Submission of proposals always open, no deadlines</p> <p>S5 Quick decisions of approval</p> <p>S6 Open for all sectors and topics</p> <p>S7 Proposal support by network partners</p> <p>S8 Good collaboration with other program services on national and regional level (TIP, FFG, other)</p> <p>S9 Broad supply chain for R&D support, strong link with complementary services/programs</p> <p>S10 Impact Assessment and strong need orientation</p> <p>S11 Long term perspective</p> <p>S12 Mixture of schemes for high R&D and lower R&D level applicants (together with other providers)</p>	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <p>W1 Pre-financing of project costs through beneficiary</p> <p>W2 High administrative effort and documentation</p> <p>W3 Decreasing number of submitted proposals</p> <p>W4 Many regular customers</p>
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <p>O1 Simplification for cost controlling (lump sums ...)</p> <p>O2 Acquisition of new customers</p> <p>O3 Increase of target group through F&E Kleinprojektförderung ("small scale R&D projects")</p> <p>O4 Strengthening R&D cooperations</p> <p>O5 Funding cross regional R&D projects</p> <p>O6 Extending collaboration on cross boarder / international collaboration</p> <p>O7 Improved cooperation with other funding agencies (like FFG)</p> <p>O8 Target oriented marketing</p>	<p>THREATS</p> <p>T1 Budget restrictions</p> <p>T2 ERDF requirements</p> <p>T3 Not reaching a critical mass of submitted applications</p> <p>T4 Many regular customers</p> <p>T5 Economic frame conditions (for companies)</p>



The long-term perspective of the R&D program over several framework periods and the openness of the program for companies of all sizes from all sectors and topics are considered as strengths of the R&D program. Also the open calls are considered as a strength. The Lower Austrian Team as well as InnoBridge partners assess the impact of the R&D program as positive and its broad band width matching the variety of needs of regional companies.

As one main weaknesses administrative burden for applicants and reporting is revealed, that is strongly interlinked with the formal requirements, demanded by the ERDF structural funds. This might also be a reason for a decreasing number of submitted proposals and many regular customers, but probably not the only one.

Due to this current situation further analysis of the reasons behind the weakness of less applications is required beside the acquisition of new customers. Also a more target oriented marketing with topic specific call within the R&D program might motivate other regional companies, which have not participated so far in these R&D state aid schemes. Furthermore, a stronger collaboration with other funding agencies is considered as an opportunity for the R&D program, which could also lead to new customers for Lower Austria's R&D program.

While the Lower Austrian team sees the threats mainly in external factors like the situation of companies, ERDF restrictions and available budget for R&D program in the future, the partners see also a risk in resting on the own laurels, because the R&D program was so successful in the past on the long-term run.

The possible reason behind the weakness that less and less regional companies apply for Lower Austria's R&D State Aid Schemes might be the high administrative burden related to ERDF.

In addition, new ways of motivating Lower Austrian companies to strive for more intensive R&D activities need to be established in Lower Austria's R&D+I policy. Therefore, the action "Feeding companies with new ideas for R&D activities stemming from Open Innovation Platforms" was elaborated and will be implemented with start of phase 2 of InnoBridge.



2.2 Action 1: Feeding companies with new ideas for R&D activities stemming from Open Innovation Platforms

2.2.1 The Background

The “Economic Strategy Lower Austria 2020” serves as a foundation for the activities and measures of all relevant public authorities and intermediaries of the Lower Austrian Ministry of Economic Affairs.

The Department of Business, Tourism and Technology of the Office of the Provincial Government of Lower Austria (WST3) is the responsible body for the development and implementation of the Economic Strategy Lower Austria and responsible for the coordination and monitoring of it. WST3 has the power to influence the targets of the Lower Austrian intermediaries.

Thus Lower Austria has already a very well developed R&D+I ecosystem including the public main actors: WST3, ecoplus – The Business Agency of Lower Austria with the programs Cluster, Technopol, Digitalisation and Internationalisation, Start-up agencies like accent and riz.up and the Technology and Innovation Partners Lower Austria (TIP) – a joint initiative of the Provincial Government of Lower Austria and the Chamber of Commerce.

Nevertheless, compared with the national gross domestic spending on R&D (3,16% in year 2017) the Lower Austrian gross domestic spending on R&D (1,83% in year 2017) is lacking behind. Among other reasons, it is getting more and more difficult to motivate regional SMEs, in particular moderate or potential innovators, to invest in R&D. This situation is reflected in a decreasing number of submitted proposals (W3 of the SWOT) and in many regular customers (W4 of the SWOT) for the regional state aid scheme „Research and Development – R&D” as identified in the Peer Review process. Strengthening R&D cooperations (O4 of SWOT) through new creative and solution oriented approaches is considered by Lower Austria and InnoBridge partners as one opportunity to increase the regional R&D activities and finally the rate of innovation. So far creative and open cooperation approaches occupies a very low status in Lower Austria.

As we learned from our InnoBridge partner Tampere Region, Open Innovation Platforms (OIP) are such a new and powerful generation of co-creation spaces facilitating the interaction of SMEs with research, education and society through a bottom-up and problem solving process. In such co-creation platforms with involvement of the relevant actors in Lower Austria like Technopols, Clusters, TIPs etc. new innovative solutions for identified problems can be developed and in single companies can clearly bring in their R&D competencies in cooperation with all platform members. Open Innovation Platforms can offer their R&D+I know-how and services not only to a broad band width of Lower Austrian companies, but also to the society.

Open Innovation (OI) has become a popular method of business development in recent years to drive innovation in individual companies or interest groups. Elementary components of a successful Open Innovation (OI) projects are good

networking between stakeholders, clear rules of the game and role allocation for all involved partners, as well as a central coordinator: for the management of such an Open Innovation Platform a professional facilitator is required – as the manifold experiences of Tampere Region underpin.

The approach of Tampere's Open Innovation Platforms is described in numerous publications (like the OECD publication "Case Finland, Tampere: Open Innovation Platforms as policy tools fostering the co-creation and value chain in a knowledge triangle") and selected by Lower Austria to complete the regional R&D+I system – starting with a first pilot.

Therefore, throughout the phase 1 of InnoBridge a strong exchange between Tampere Region and Lower Austria took place to learn how to transfer the approach to Lower Austria. First information about the OIP was provided by Tampere Region at the Peer Review of Tampere's addressed policy instrument

The session on Tampere's Good Practices as part of the Interregional Learning Workshop 4 in Tampere in March 2017 gave Lower Austria a deeper insight into the culture and way of thinking in terms of platforms and open approaches, which are principle basics also for Tampere's Good Practices "Kampusareena" and "Situational Picture of Innovation". This exchange was intensified in Speed Dates between the Tampere and Lower Austria partners during the Capacity Building workshop on Good Practices in Valladolid in November 2017 as part of the Interregional Learning Workshop 6 (ILW6)

The four Action Plan Facilitation Workshops (APFW1 at ILW6 in Valladolid/Castilla y León in November 2017, APFW2 at ILW8 in Bolzano/South Tyrol in June 2018, APFW3 at ILW9 in Baden/Lower Austria in November 2018 and APFW4 in Tampere in February 2019) were further opportunities for Lower Austria to exchange ideas and draft concept of implementing Open Innovation Platforms with all InnoBridge partners.

The Staff Exchange of Lower Austria in Tampere in October 2018 allowed to dig deeper into the already successful implemented Finnish Open Innovation Platforms, to learn about success factors and to clarify some further details for a transfer to Lower Austria. WST3 gained a better understanding of the different types of platforms. As the platforms are very different, they are not easy to establish and thus a high flexibility and enthusiasm of the people working in them is needed. In addition, these different types of platforms requires also very flexible funding schemes. Which means for Lower Austria that also a tailor made regional funding scheme for the regional Open Innovation Platform as prerequisite has to be installed.

This interregional learning process in phase 1 of InnoBridge went hand in hand with the development of a guideline how to structure the process of establishing OIPs in Lower Austria. The guideline was presented by Lower Austria and discussed with the InnoBridge partners at the fourth Action Plan Facilitation Workshop being part of the Interregional Learning Workshop 10 in February 2019 in Tampere Region. The action description in the next chapter is summarising this guideline.

In January 2019 at the regional workshop on the future of Open Innovation Platforms in Lower Austria with participation of the relevant Lower Austrian stakeholders of the R&I ecosystem a common understanding of Open Innovation Platforms was gained, including the different types of platforms. Workshop participants sketched the picture how Open Innovation Platforms will work in Lower Austria as well as which rules and roles have to be fulfilled. Furthermore topics for a first pilot platform were discussed. As result of phase 1 the following action is elaborated.

2.2.2 Action

The action is consisting of 8 phases (phase 0 to phase 7) required for successful implementation of a pilot platform in Lower Austria. In each phase individual tasks are allocated and different methods are applied, which doesn't mean that all these tasks and methods listed are compulsory if new insights during implementation require some changes. This might have also impact on the timeline of single phases.

This description provides an orientation for those that manage the innovation platform and for those stakeholders involved in the process of setting up the platform. The bandwidth of required platform tasks and the appropriateness of single platform methods are highly dependent on the themes of research.

Innovation platforms need a clear structure that describe the process as well as the targets. At the same time, innovation platforms need flexibility related to the topic of the platform and its members. The single phases are as follows:

Phase 0 – “Starting a platform program”

The phase “Starting a platform program” is an all-encompassing phase. It defines and sets up the Open Innovation Platform in the context of the Lower Austrian ecosystem. At an initial stage, WST3 gets in touch with key actors in the domain of innovation, R&D in the state of Lower Austria, to discuss the opportunities provided by the OIP and best ideas for implementation thereof. Then the overall structure and goals of the pilot innovation platform is created.

Phase 0 is running constantly as it is the phase used by WST3 to shape and influence the innovation platform. Biannual meetings with the key actors of the innovation platform ensure that WST3 can track the progress of the platform, knows what is happening and has an overview about resource spending. Concepts and ideas will be assessed in the assessment meetings, and sometimes a decision must be taken to stop financing support for the platform or some projects, if they don't seem to reach their targets. WST3 is a strong partner of the innovation platform and foster the development thereof and its members, and will support the public relations and networks of the platform. In addition WST3 is also financing this platform.

A sustainability concept shall ensure that the platform becomes increasingly self-organised over time, and that WST3 is changing its role from an active

supporter to a strategic partner. While public financial resources in form of a funded project shall support the beginning of the platform, it shall use less and less public resources during its ongoing lifetime.

Phase Number	0	
Phase Title	Starting a platform programm	
Leading Actor	WST3	
Tasks	T1	Provide financial resources
	T2	Conceptualize the processes defining relevant themes for platforms
	T3	Further develop the platform according to feedback
	T4	Sustainability concept of the innovation platform
Actors	WST3	
	relevant intermediaries of R&I ecosystem	
Methods	Supervision	
	R&D processing	
	Reviews	
	Outreach to communities and interest groups	
	Workshops and events	
Expected outcome	The platform program is created and implemented. Continuous further development creates a sustainable successful innovation platform.	

Phase 1 – “Initiate”

In the phase “Initiate” key actors in Lower Austria will get together under the guidance of WST3 in order to define a theme of the first innovation platform. The theme must fit the Lower Austrian research networks and R&I ecosystem. The government has the contacts and knowledge to get stakeholders in a certain thematic domain together to discuss opportunities for an innovation platform in Lower Austria. Once the concrete theme has been decided, and the key stakeholder have been informed and partly committed, the innovation platform can be created in broad and deepening process. At the end of this phase, WST3 will invite feasible expert to become the platform facilitator.

While the process of “Initiate” is rather closed in the early stages of the platform (especially in the first stage), this phase can become increasingly open during a longer lifetime of the platform. Similar to phase 0, WST3 might reduce its engagement in this phase over time and make the innovation platform more independent.



Phase number	1	
Phase title	Initiate	
Leading actor	WST3/Facilitator	
Tasks	T1	Identify an area of interest / theme
	T2	Identify stakeholders
	T3	get an overview perspective of the problem in the area of interest
	T4	Identify the facilitator
	T5	Identify potential platform members and stakeholders
Actors	WST3	
	R&D organizations	
	Experts	
	Interest groups	
	Other Departments of the Provincial Government	
Methods	Meetings and Workshops	
	Calls	
	Desk research	
Expected outcome	Identification of the theme of the innovation platform and the key organization and persons that might be involved.	

Phase 2 – “Decide on focus”

Phase “Decide on focus” starts with the platform facilitator taking the key role in the innovation platform. The platform facilitator seeks to gather experts, interested persons, companies, research institution related to the theme decided in phase 1 in the innovation platform as members. The outreach can be through call, individual contacts, events etc.

The platform members shall then create teams that have similar ideas and visions. There can be a various number of teams and project ideas; and the teams shall not work separated from each other. There shall be a creative discussion to find innovations in the thematic. They shall then further develop their ideas, make basic research and discussion solutions to problems, hence they shall narrow down and focus their innovation ideas.

The platform facilitator knows what is going on. He/She will know about the demands of the members of the platform and can already assess informally, if facilities and finance are available in the Lower Austrian context, especially and if applicable the funding sources of the Lower Austrian state aid scheme „Research and Development – R&D&I” should be used. The teams will then set up the concepts for their innovation projects, which mark the beginning of phase 3.



Phase number	2	
Phase title	Decide on focus	
Leading actor	Platform facilitator	
Tasks	T1	Invitation for participation in the platform
	T2	Further define the concrete focus area
	T3	Sketch potential problems and opportunities in the focus area
	T4	Sketch the most problematic issues (bottleneck)
	T4	Identify experts within and outside the target group
	T5	Reach out for open participation especially among organizations and persons that have expertise and interest in the focus area
	T6	Get external knowledge (from various sources - local to international)
	T7	Ensure finances for the platform
	T8	Create an overview of all relevant findings of phase 1 and 2 to get everybody on the same level of understanding of the project
Actors	Platform Facilitator	
	Potential platform members	
	Interest groups	
	Public	
	Experts	
	Stakeholders	
Methods	Meetings and workshops	
	Expert interviews	
	Focus groups	
	Hackathons	
	Call for participation	
	Desk research	
Expected outcome	Formation of the platform members and decisions concerning locations of platform facilities. Profound understanding of the concrete problem and a general approach towards solving the problem.	



Phase 3 – “Identify options”

The platform members decide what they want to do to solve the problems or take advantage of the opportunities that they have identified. The range of options may be wide. For example, they may decide to test new varieties of a product or a service, explore ways to improve supplies of input etc.

Phase number	3	
Phase title	Identify options	
Leading actor	Platform members	
Tasks	T1	Decide on (a combination of) solutions to the problem
	T2	Assessment of the applicability of the solutions
	T3	Sketch an implementation plan
	T4	Market needs analysis
	T5	Clarify IPR, finance and other regulations
	T6	Decide location and facilities
Actors	Platform Facilitator	
	Platform members	
	Experts	
	WST3	
	Public	
	Potential costumers/consumers	
Methods	Stakeholders	
	Meetings and workshops	
	Expert Interviews	
	Feasibility studies	
	Open innovation	
	Market study	
	Call for proposals	
R&D funding processes		
Expected outcome	Concrete definition of the decided solution(s) and assessment of success changes towards establishment of a new product/process.	



Phase 4 – “Test and refine solutions”

Solutions must be tested and adapted to make sure they work. New production processes can be tested; traders may try offering more for higher grades of produce; an input supplier may market-test a new type of product. The innovation may be a new technology (process or product). The innovation platform coordinates these experiments and monitors whether they are successful.

Phase number	4	
Phase title	Test and refine solutions	
Leading actor	Platform members	
Tasks	T1	Create an evaluation methodology
	T2	Develop and test solutions in specific scenarios - iterative process
	T3	Include potential costumers/consumers in the testing
	T4	Create prototype
	T5	Prototype testing in real environment
	T6	Constant evaluation of the solution and process
Actors	Platform Facilitator	
	Platform members	
	Public	
	Experts	
	Stakeholders	
	Potential costumers/consumers	
Methods	Specific evaluation methodologies	
	Living labs	
	Open innovation	
	Citizen science	
	Lobbying	
	Co-creation	
	Test and error trials	
Iterative methods		
Expected outcome	The platform members develop a solution that becomes ready to market.	



Phase 5 – “Develop capacity”

In most cases, it is necessary to develop the capacity of different actors in order for the solutions to succeed. Customers may need training in a new technique; companies may need help with organization; new ways may be needed to distribute products or services and to manage the marketing. The innovation platform identifies these needs and finds ways to develop the capacity required.

Phase number	5	
Phase title	Develop capacity	
Leading actor	Platform members	
Tasks	T1	Ensure learning from testing
	T2	Identify the needed capacities of each actor to create a successful solution
	T3	Identify the contributions needed from each actor
	T4	Further develop the capacities needed for successful contributions from each actor
	T5	Ensure that the developed capacities can be reproduced and transferred
Actors	Platform members	
	Platform Facilitator	
	Potential costumers/consumers	
	Stakeholders	
Methods	Staff training	
	Documentation	
	Training material development	
	Knowledge management	
Expected outcome	Platform members will provide all means and capacities necessary to develop the solution into a successful product	



Phase 6 – “Scale up”

If the innovation is successful, the innovation platform works with its member groups to get it adopted widely. That may mean documenting and publicizing the innovation, arranging training and study visits, persuading other groups to adopt it etc.

Phase number	6	
Phase title	Scale up.	
Leading actor	Platform Members	
Tasks	T1	Information campaigns in specific target groups
	T2	Create business model
	T3	Marketing campaigns among costumers
	T4	Training and instructions for costumers
	T5	Improve reproduction of the innovation
	T6	Ensure customer and consumer aid and support and feedback
	T7	Improve solution based on feedback
Actors	Platform Facilitator	
	Platform members	
	Interest groups	
	Stakeholders	
	Costumers and consumers	
	Public	
	Experts	
	WST3	
Methods	Information campaigns	
	Marketing	
	Trainings	
	Workshops	
Expected outcome	Market outreach and application of the solution in the real environment. Usage of the innovation on a scale that is large enough developing sustainable business models.	

Phase 7 – “Analyse and learn”

Learning what has succeeded and what has not is an important part of innovation platforms, especially those with a research focus. This information is fed back to platform members so they can identify further changes to be made. This is a constantly ongoing process and creates learnings from successful and failed projects alike. Such learning, exchange and networking events shall take place at least once a quarter but can occur more often according to the needs of the platform, its members and stakeholders.

Phase number	7	
Phase title	Analyse and learn.	
Leading actor	Platform Facilitator/WST3	
Tasks	T1	Create lessons learned
	T2	Report results to relevant actors and platform members
	T3	Identify and implement improvements to the innovation platform
	T4	Evaluation of the entire platform and its processes/WST3
Actors	Platform Facilitator	
	Platform members	
	Costumers and consumers	
	WST3	
Methods	Internal and external project assessment	
	Workshops	
	Events	
	Community feedback	
Expected outcome	Transparently improve the processes of the innovation platform, and enable shared learning.	

2.2.3 Players involved

The Provincial Government of Lower Austria, WST3 will be the main responsible actor. WST3 will finance this first pilot platform. In addition, WST3 will be the responsible Project Manager over the first phases of the project and thus WST3 is responsible for setting up the platform. As soon as it is decided in which already existing infrastructure of the R&I ecosystem the first platform can be included and the Platform Facilitator is hired WST3 will hand over the Project Management to the Facilitator. From this point on WST3 will keep a steering role and will be responsible for the monitoring and evaluation of the platform

Currently it is planned that the platform and its Facilitator will be embedded in the already existing structures of the Lower Austrian development agency ecoplus, thus also ecoplus will be an important actor. ecoplus has already over 15 years experience



in running Clusters and Technopols, which means that synergies of this two programs can be used for the pilot platform.

Depending on the topic of the first pilot innovation platform other relevant stakeholders from the Lower Austrian R&I eco system will be included and if needed other actors from the Provincial Government of Lower Austria or from federal organisations.

2.2.4 Timeframe

The milestone plan was scheduled for the runtime of the second phase of the InnoBridge project. The following milestone plan consists of a tight schedule, as first results shall become visible within the lifetime of the InnoBridge project.

Of course WST3 and the involved stakeholders will continue with the implementation of the missing phases after the end of the InnoBridge project.

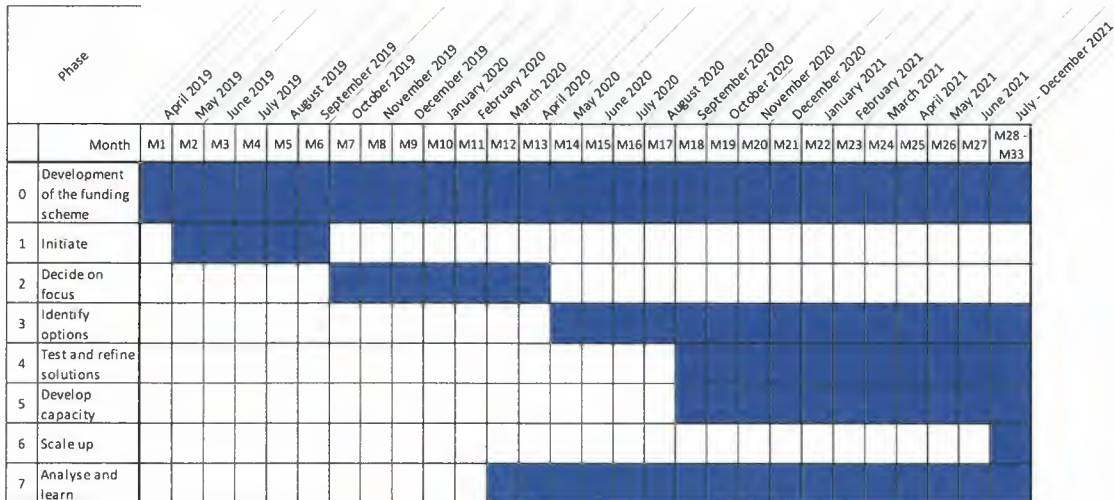
Months	Phase	Milestones
April 19	Phase 0	Start with the Implementation of the Pilot Platform and the development of the funding scheme
Sept 19	Phase 1	Workshop for the identification of one or more themes of the innovation platform Internal call for interested stakeholders within the R&D and entrepreneur ecosystem of Lower Austria
Oct 19	Phase 1	Thematic workshop with stakeholders in Lower Austria Decision on general theme of the platform (theme 1)
Dec. 19	Phase 0 Phase 1	Biannual innovation platform progress assessment and development meeting First financial plan for the innovation platform Area of interest of the platform identified (theme 1)
	Phase 2	Platform facilitator takes the lead of the innovation platform (theme 1)
Dec. 19	Phase 2	Concrete plans for the 1st thematic platform (theme 1)
Jan. 20	Phase 0	Biannual innovation platform progress assessment and development meeting



Feb. 20	Phase 2	Start of workshop-series with potential platform members to: sketch potential problems, opportunities, solutions (theme 1)
Mar. 20	Phase 2	Teams are formed out of the platform members to work on concrete projects (theme 1)
June 20	Phase 0	Funding of platform (theme 1)
July 20	Phase 0	Biannual innovation platform progress assessment and development meeting
Sep. 20	Phase 3-5 Phase 0	Detailed project plan (implementation, finance, facilities, market analysis, methodology, IPR, resources, training, etc.) (theme 1) Deadline of the R&D call (theme 1)
Nov 20	Phase 3	Start of concept development for new individual solutions like products, services or processes (theme 1) after start
Nov. 20	Phase 3-5	Start of platform projects according to detailed plan (theme 1)
Jan. 21	Phase 0	Biannual innovation platform progress assessment and development meeting
June 21	Phase 7	Progress Reporting of individual projects with the platform facilitator (theme 1)
July 21	Phase 0	Biannual innovation platform progress assessment and development meeting

GANTT chart

The following GANTT chart provides an overview over the implementation timeline of the platform as pilot in the Lower Austrian context as described above. Changes in this timeline are possible.



2.2.5 Costs

Required budget for pilot action:

- Staff costs for facilitator and WST3 for setting up and running the first pilot platform and costs for environment of the platform (office, space for platform members, workshops etc.) approx. € 400.000,00
- Budget for funding the R&D projects coming out of the platform within the Lower Austrian Funding program R&D&I estimation for 5 – 6 R&D projects each approx. 300.000,00, which will be in total approx. € 1.800.000,00

2.2.6 Funding sources

Funding for setting up the first pilot platform is provided by Lower Austrian Economy and Tourism Funds of the Provincial Government of Lower Austria (regional funding without ERDF Funds).

Platform projects (from November 2020 on according to schedule above) will be financed through the addressed policy instrument (ERDF Programme Investment in Growth and Jobs Austria 2014-2020, Investment Priority 1(b) R&I Investments/Synergies) in a first step. In a second step after the end of the current programming period 2014-2020 platform projects will be financed by the Lower

Austrian Economy and Tourism Funds of the Provincial Government of Lower Austria and probably be co-financed with ERDF money within the new ERDF program Austria 2021-2027. Start of the elaboration of the ERDF programme Austria 2021 – 2027 will be mid 2019 and it should be finished by mid 2020.

2.2.7 Monitoring indicators for action implementation

- Number of project ideas developed by platform members that developed by platform member: 10
- Number of funded R&D projects: 5
- % of SMEs benefiting from the instrument that have employed new R&D+I employees by 2023 (link to OP output indicator CO24/1b): 8



3. Technology and Innovation Partner Lower Austria (TIP Lower Austria)

3.1 SWOT Analysis

The TIP Technology and Innovation Partners is a program of Lower Austria's Regional Innovation Policy and an important component of the "Pyramid of Technology and Innovation Support" within Lower Austria's Economic Strategy, which is well known in Europe as an example for smart specialisation.

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



The following SWOT-Matrix by the Team of Lower Austria and after Peer Review by all InnoBridge-Partners is summarising the PR results:

<p>STRENGTHS</p> <p>S1 Direct and ongoing contact with companies</p> <p>S2 Regional offices allows direct contact</p> <p>S3 Non-bureaucratic funding</p> <p>S4 Quick adaption of services or elaboration of new ones (high flexibility)</p> <p>S5 Broad scope of services</p> <p>S6 Leveraging financial regional money with EU means</p> <p>S7 Good collaboration among intermediaries</p> <p>S8 Big network of stakeholders</p> <p>S9 Continuity – Experience of almost 30years</p> <p>S10 No restriction to company size, branches or topics</p> <p>S11 Excellent identification of companies' needs</p>	<p>WEAKNESSESS</p> <p>W1 No tool to measure the direct impact at the company side</p> <p>W2 Funding is restricted to EUR 4.800</p> <p>W3 Some consulting cases have no deep impact according to limitation of hours – partly scratching on the surface</p> <p>W4 Partly consultants can create the needs for companies</p> <p>W5 Due to the organisational structure (joint initiative) no clear tip brand</p> <p>W6 Within economic chamber some departments are suffering lack of knowledge about TIP services</p> <p>W7 Broad offer difficult to communicate</p> <p>W8 One-time impact – not sustainable</p> <p>W9 Dependency of ERDF funds (2)</p> <p>W10 Foresight activities are missing</p>
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <p>O1 Identification of new topics and trends</p> <p>O2 Bridge to cluster</p> <p>O3 First entry point for companies for getting in touch with funding</p> <p>O4 Better using of economic Chamber as multiplier</p> <p>O5 You have the community – but are you using it effectively and ambitiously? Tip can act as facilitator</p> <p>O6 Creation of a database to analyse and classify the infos of the reports</p> <p>O7 800 reports → get knowledge from them for development of the management of the system</p>	<p>THREATS</p> <p>T1 Without EU means decrease of support services</p> <p>T2 Service for all companies and many topics available – fear of getting bogged down</p> <p>T3 Microenterprises not applying because they cannot afford to cover/co-finance experts' rates</p> <p>T4 Traditional free service</p> <p>T5 Ending of funds in the future</p> <p>T6 Which impact would have the closure of the service on the companies?</p>



The SWOT-Analysis provided TIP and the Lower Austrian government with a comprehensive, but also critical picture through partners' assessments of strengths and weaknesses of the TIP services.

InnoBridge partners see main advantages of the TIP approach in the and direct face-to face and non-beaurocratic contacts with companies, enabling both parties

- getting to know the person who are in charge with innovation,
- getting to know their innovation potential and
- getting to know the problems and the needs of companies

InnoBridge partners pointed also out, that the highly flexible funded consulting service supports small, middle and big companies in implementing innovation activities.

On the other hand, TIP, as it is a soft measure, faces the problem to document the direct and indirect effects of the soft measure and the outcomes of the small de-minimis grant for the companies. The challenge of TIP is to show the success and sustainable effects of the services in a long run which requires close relationships between TIP and their customers over this long run. Nowadays these long-term relationships are not systematically developed and maintained by TIP, which has the risk to create one-time, but not sustainable impact. InnoBridge partners have identified this fact as a weakness in the Peer Review process (see W8 in the SWOT matrix above)

Based on the Peer Review and SWOT results TIP will improve its services according to this action plan.



3.2 Action 2: R&D&I Portfolio for SMEs – creating sustainable impact on SMEs' innovation activities and the commercialisation of R&D results

3.2.1 The Background

TIPs main goal according to the Smart Specialisation Strategy of Lower Austria is to increase the innovation capability of companies.

Since decades, TIP staff is providing their service "Innovation Coaching" for Lower Austrian SMEs through ongoing contact with the SMEs. The aim is to foster innovation activities through providing focussed information about funding schemes and the offer of innovation support services on regional, national and European level according to the needs of the regional SMEs. This coaching should assist beneficiaries in improving their innovation strategy.

As complementary service TIP is offering the funded consultancy service to regional companies tackling all fields that are necessary to bring a new idea successful to market or to solve current problems in technology or in the production process in terms of innovation. Also "Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) advice" is a substantial part of the TIP service portfolio. The relationship between TIP and beneficiaries is an informal without contract or with a contract for single funded consulting projects, but nothing like a framework contract over a longer time.

Even though this service portfolio is highly appreciated by the Lower Austrian companies for its effectiveness, TIPs are facing the problem of achieving sufficient sustainable impact with their systematic support for the beneficiaries (see weakness W8 of the SWOT results). Of course a mid- and long-term impact cannot be guaranteed for every beneficiary and for each individual support project, but there is room for improvement the identification and documentation of long-term impact of TIP services: In several cases the provided service has only one-time-impact and does not lead to a significant improvement of the beneficiary's innovation capability. Furthermore a more systematic relationship management with its customers allows TIP also to identify new topics and trends at companies as input for Lower Austria's R&D and innovation policy in a more effective way as InnoBridge partners highlighted in the Peer Review (see opportunity O1 in the SWOT matrix).

Based on findings from the interregional Peer Review process with InnoBridge Partners (see also chapter 3.1) Lower Austria decided to develop and implement this action. The action development process is characterised by intensive interregional exchange with InnoBridge partners: in each of the 4 Action Plan Facilitation Sessions (November 2017 in Castilla y León, June 2018 in Bolzano South-Tyrol, November 2018 in Lower Austria, February 2019 in Tampere) Lower Austria has presented the current ideas and status of the action development and discussed them with all InnoBridge partners.

The aim of this action is to increase the number of TIP's customers that can demonstrate a sustainable impact of the TIP support on their innovation capability and performance. In recent years TIP has noticed an increased interest of regional SMEs in funded consulting service by R&D-Institutions. These funding projects



resulted in broadened innovation-activities of the beneficiaries. Based on these empirical findings the cooperation between companies and R&D-Institutions in an early stage of innovation-activities can be considered as a success factor for a sustainable effect of innovation support. Thus, an intensified focus on R&D is considered as an appropriate approach for the aim of increasing the sustainable impact of TIP services on beneficiaries' innovation performance.

Usually a contact between TIP and an SME is initiated for a new Innovation Project by the SME. Primary the SME is interested in short-term assistance for the current project! The aim of the R&D&I-Portfolio is to get also a deeper insight into strategic and future R&D&I-activities of the requesting SME. This would enable the TIP to offer a more bespoke support for the SME with more strategic and long-term orientation. For such a strategic and long-term orientation, numerous TIP-Services might also be interesting:

- Advice on Intellectual Property Rights / Patent-inquiry
- Possible partners for projects
- Funded consulting, also by R&D-Institutions
- Possible R&D&I-funding-schemes
- Is the project suitable for a funding-call in the near future?

R&D&I-Portfolio will not substitute any of the current TIP services but complement the existing service portfolio and is strongly interlinked with the Innovation Coaching and funded consultancy service.

3.2.2 Action

In the following "SME" includes also SME-sized companies that are owned by a large enterprise but have no support in R&D&I-activities from the owner.

The R&D&I Portfolio aims to increase the SME's strategic R&D&I competencies – through further development of own internal skills and/or access to external R&D&I competencies by strategic cooperations with RTOs (Research and Technology Organisations), HEI (Higher Education Institutions) and specialised consultants.

The R&D&I Portfolio should cover the planned innovation-activities for the next 2 to 3 years. This is a period which is on the one side also practicable for smaller enterprises and on the other side allows a strategic approach with mid-term activities.

The R&D&I Portfolio will concentrate on the early stage of R&D&I having in focus the Technology Readiness Levels TRL 3 (Critical function, proof of concept established). TRL 4 (Laboratory testing of prototype component or process) and TRL 5 (Laboratory testing of integrated system).

The R&D&I Portfolio should be the basis for the development of either new products or new processes. The R&D&I Portfolio is market driven and is based on the current R&D&I competencies of the SME.



Current R&D&I competencies of the SMEs in the relevant technology fields need to be mapped and external RTO/HEI have to be identified as strategic collaboration partners to strengthen the R&D&I competencies/close existing gaps.

Due to this, the R&D&I Portfolio should cover the following aspects:

- Recent R&D&I-activities (last 3 years) and results
- Relevant technological challenges of the future
- Relevant Market-Trends of the future
- R&D&I-fields to be tackled
- Expected results of R&D&I-activities
- Identification of ideas for R&D&I projects and further elaboration on demand

If the SME will be already in the position to initiate and run a concrete R&D&I project within the 2 to 3 years, stemming from R&D&I Portfolio development, TIP will also support the beneficiary in finding appropriate external R&D&I partners for collaborative R&D&I projects and/or identifying relevant R&D&I funding schemes (either on regional or national or European level). For specific open questions/identified problems the beneficiaries can also apply for further consulting units of the funded consultancy service.

Identified technological and market trends from the point of view of the SMEs will be aggregated over all R&D&I Portfolios as an important input for further trend analysis (like a "Trend Radar") in combination with Lower Austria's Open Innovation activities.

It should be possible to complete the portfolio in about 2 hours.

The results will be documented in an EXCEL application, called "TIP F&E&I Portfolio", which is developed individually for this action (see graphics on the next page). Up to 5, for the SME most important R&D&I topics are described with key words and characterised by the categories "Strategic Relevance" – "current TRL" and "realisation within x years". According to this characterisation the R&D&I topics are visualised in a metric "TRL x Realisation" with the size of the bubble representing the strategic relevance. This visualisation helps the entrepreneur – and the TIP – to get a clearer picture of the most relevant R&D&I topics.



Layout of R&D&I-Portfolio (Output for the Company)

TIP F&E&I-Portfolio @TIP 2018		TIP EFRE N WKO NG	Notizen
EuroBox (www.eurobox.at)			
	erstes F&E&I-Thema FEI 1 Erläuterung zu erstem Thema Stichworte		
	zweites F&E&I-Thema FEI 2 Erläuterung zu zweitem Thema Stichworte		
	drittes F&E&I-Thema Erläuterung zu drittem Thema Stichworte		
	viertes F&E&I-Thema FEI 4 Erläuterung zu viertem Thema Stichworte		
	fünftes F&E&I-Thema Erläuterung zu funfem Thema Stichworte		
Technology Readiness Levels (Quelle: wikipedia) TRL 1: Prototyp im Labor TRL 2: Prototyp in Einsatzumgebung TRL 3: Versuchsaufbau im Labor TRL 4: Versuchsaufbau in Einsatzumgebung TRL 5: Nachweis der Funktionsfähigkeit einer Technologie TRL 6: Beschreibung der Anwendung einer Technologie TRL 7: Beobachtung und Beschreibung des Funktionsprinzips Aus interner Sicht des Unternehmens zu bewerten		Strategische (Markt-) Relevanz: 9: relevant 8: relevant 7: relevant 6: relevant 5: relevant 4: relevant 3: relevant 2: relevant 1: kaum relevant	Trends (Markt / Produkt / Technologie): Stichworte zu den Trends, welche die F&E&I-Aktivitäten des Unternehmens beeinflussen werden!
F&E-Partner: Bestehende F&E-Partner			Datum: TLN-Unt.: TIP-MA:

Additional Information for TIP and Input Sheet

F&E&I-Themen	strategische Relevanz	TRL derzeit	Realisierung in X Jahren	Portfolio	Branche/Produkte
erstes F&E&I-Thema FEI 1 Erläuterung zu erstem Thema Stichworte	1	7	1		Kompetenzen Exportländer
zweites F&E&I-Thema FEI 2 Erläuterung zu zweitem Thema Stichworte	3	4	2		
drittes F&E&I-Thema FEI 3 Erläuterung zu drittem Thema Stichworte	5	3	3		
viertes F&E&I-Thema FEI 4 Erläuterung zu viertem Thema Stichworte	7	2	4		
fünftes F&E&I-Thema FEI 5 Erläuterung zu funfem Thema Stichworte	9	1	5		
Technology Readiness Levels (Quelle: wikipedia) TRL 1: Prototyp im Labor TRL 2: Prototyp in Einsatzumgebung TRL 3: Versuchsaufbau im Labor TRL 4: Versuchsaufbau in Einsatzumgebung TRL 5: Nachweis der Funktionsfähigkeit einer Technologie TRL 6: Beschreibung der Anwendung einer Technologie TRL 7: Beobachtung und Beschreibung des Funktionsprinzips Aus interner Sicht des Unternehmens zu bewerten				Widerstände / knappe Ressourcen	Exportquote: Anzahl MA: F&E&I-MA: F&E&I-Quote: Umsatz: neue Prod. (K): Datum: TLN-Unt.: TIP-MA:



After 1,5 years the impact of the R&D&I Portfolio can be evaluated in terms of

- number of portfolios: 30 expected
- ideas for R&D&I projects generated
- Did the R&D&I Portfolio lead to applications in regional, national funding programs?
- have the identified technological and market trends any influence on the Lower Austrian R&D&I-policy (e.g. picked up by innovation platforms, Technopoles or cluster initiatives)

Thus, the R&D&I Portfolio is improving the competencies of the regional companies and strengthening their strategic relationship with TIP. Due to the integrated approach the R&D&I Portfolio is creating additional leverage effects for the Lower Austrian R&D&I policy by contributing to the identification of technological/market trends, fostering the R&D collaboration of regional companies with RTOs as well by raising the beneficiaries' awareness for R&D&I funding schemes based on their demand stemming from the R&D&I Portfolio.

In November and December 2018 the first 8 R&D&I Portfolios have been carried out as a feasibility check. The structure has been adopted and fine-tuned due to the feedback of the companies – thus the R&D&I Portfolio is ready for action implementation from January 2019 on.

3.2.3 Players involved

Beside TIP WST3 is the main actor to be involved. The tool will also be offered via Lower Austrian stakeholders, like the Lower Austrian Clusters (communication to companies) and Technopoles (communication to Lower Austrian R&D-Institutions).

3.2.4 Timeframe

The structure has been adopted due to the feedback of the companies. The implementation phase started in January 2019! On the TIP-Internet-pages an information about the R&D&I-Portfolio has been implemented:

<https://www.wko.at/service/noe/innovation-technologie-digitalisierung/f-e-i-portfolio.html>

Permanent marketing-activities and focussing on target-groups for which companies the R&D&I Portfolio is most interesting. The aim is, to execute about 10 to 20 R&D&I-Portfolios per year, depending on interest of the companies.

- New customers (after first contact with TIP)
- Customers with existing R&D-activities
- Customers with no contact in last years (lost customers): At the End of 2018 an investigation of TIP-customers since 2009 was carried out. As a result, 61 customers (out of 3008) had no contact with TIP since 2016. This companies



will be contacted per email (and additional telephone-call) and an innovation-portfolio will be offered. The same procedure will be done at the end of 2019 for companies with no contact since 2017.

- Customers with interest in funding schemes: TIP organises information-events (spring and autumn) for R&D&I-funding schemes 2 times per year. The participating companies will be contacted per email and an innovation-portfolio will be offered.
- Other possible target-group?

April 2020 – July 2020 Evaluation of the pilot action with WST3. Decision about adaption and further improvements.

3.2.5 Costs

Costs for marketing of the R&D&I Portfolio are covered by the normal TIP-Budget.

Required budget for the pilot action has two components:

1. The coaching of the companies is covered by the existing TIP budget and will sum up to approx. 30.000 Euro over the phase 2 of InnoBridge: 30 portfolios, each with an effort of 4 hours to 16 hours; usually 1 or 2 TIPs are involved depending on size and complexity of portfolio → effort of approx. 100 to 200 days in total
2. the budget for interlinked consultancy projects is estimated with 180.000 Euro for 2019/2020: 30 portfolios with each 2 consultancy projects = 60 projects, each with a budget of approx. 3.000 Euro.

If the activity leads to an increased number of funded consulting, it might be necessary to increase the budget for funded consulting. Such an increase is not reflected in the current estimation of costs and influenced budget.

3.2.6 Funding sources

The funding source is the TIP-Budget for funded consulting under the addressed policy instrument.



3.2.7 Monitoring indicators for action implementation

- Influenced amount of Structural Funds: 30.000 Euro (TIP coaching)
- Influenced amount of other Funds: 180.000 Euro (consultancy projects, national funds)
- The self-defined performance indicator " „% of SMEs benefiting from the instrument that have employed new their R&D+I employees by 2023" (link to OP output indicator CO24/1b) from the InnoBridge application is not considered as a relevant indicator for this action and will be substituted by the following set of meaningful indicators:
 - number of portfolios
target value: 30 over 1,5 years 2019-2020
 - ideas for R&D&I projects generated
target value: >30 (each portfolio should at least include 1 idea for an R&D&I-Project)
 - Applications in regional, national funding programs due to R&D&I Portfolio
target value: >15

4. Signature

Date: 15.07.2019

Signature: 

(DI Kerstin Koren)

Area Manager Technology & Innovation

Department of Business, Tourism and Technology of the Office of the Provincial
Government of Lower Austria (WST3)

Stamp of the organisation (if available):