

A photograph showing the lower legs and feet of a person running on a paved road. The road has a yellow dashed center line and leads towards a bright horizon under a cloudy sky.

Action Plan

Lodzkie Region, Poland



European Union
European Regional
Development Fund



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1. General information

Project: Sport for Growth and Healthy & Vital Communities

Partner organisation: VERDE Foundation for Sport Innovations

Other partner organisations involved: -

Region: Lodzkie region (voivodship), PL

NUTS2 region: Lodzkie region (voivodship), PL

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2. Background

Inno4Sports project

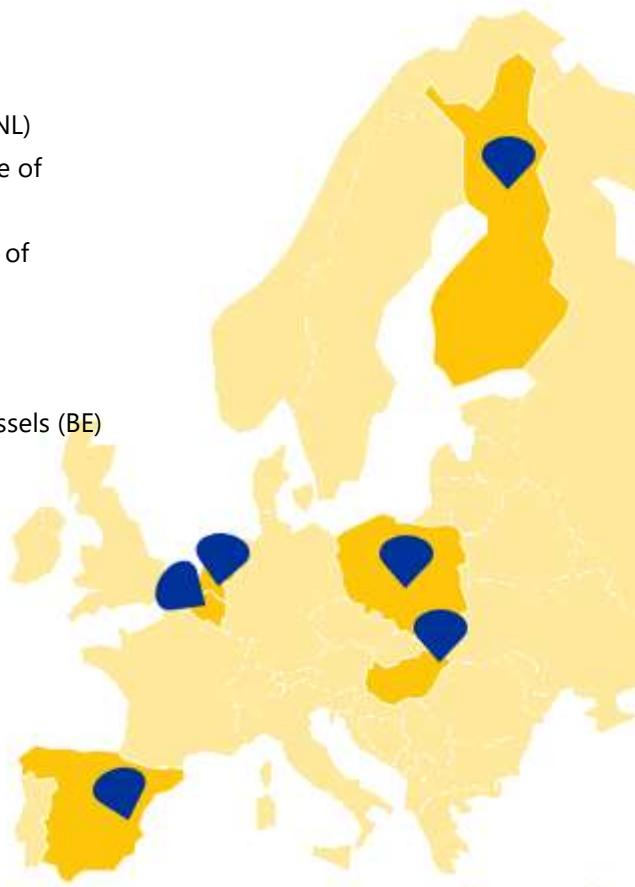
The Inno4Sports project brings together eight partners from six European regions that all share the ambition to promote the role of sport innovation in their regional economy. The aim of the project is to improve the performance and efficiency of regional development programmes (policy instruments) to make them better support innovation and business creation in the field of sport and vitality. This was done through interregional learning and knowledge exchange.

During the first phase of the project, from June 2018 to November 2020, the partners have shared good practices and learnt from each other through study visits, workshops and online communication. Based on interregional learning, each partner region has developed their own action plan where they determine how they will implement the lessons learnt in order to improve their regional development programmes.

You are now looking at the results of the first phase of the project. The second phase of the Inno4Sports project, December 2020 to November 2022, is dedicated to the implementation of the action plans. This document defines what has been learnt from partner regions during first phase of Inno4Sports and how these learnings are implemented in the Łódźkie Region.

Project partners:

- Cluster Sports & Technology, South Netherlands (NL)
- Instituto de Biomecánica (IBV) & Valencian Institute of Business Competitiveness (IVACE), Valencia (ES)
- MSE Cluster Ltd & University of Debrecen Institute of Sport Sciences, Hajdú-Bihar (HU)
- Regional Council of Lapland, Lapland (FI)
- Verde Cluster, Łódź (PL)
- European Platform for Sport Innovation (EPSI), Brussels (BE)



Regional context

The Łódzkie region (voivodship = województwo in Polish) is located in Central Poland. Inhabited by 2,6 million people, it occupies an area of 18.000 square km. The capital of the voivodship is the city of Łódź, the third biggest, after Warsaw and Krakow, city in Poland. Together with neighbouring Zgierz, Pabianice, Konstantynów Łódzki and Aleksandrów Łódzki the city of Łódź creates an agglomeration with just above one million inhabitants, a big economic, commercial, scientific, academic and cultural centre.

The region needs strong incentives to improve the recognition of sports and related innovation as the clue to health and economic prosperity, particularly facing the unprecedented pandemic situation and population ageing. Sport potentially representing regional smart specialization via innovation would impose positive influence on society and thus - improve competitiveness.

As a result of the I4S project implementation, VERDE has identified that the main challenge in the Łódzkie region in relation to policy making on sports & vitality is that the collaboration among stakeholders within the quadruple helix model does not function properly.

Basing on VERDE's experience, two major problems cause this situation:

1. Lack of a proper communication & consultation platform between involved parties. As a consequence, policy making is based very much on a top-down approach with low representation of the civil society agents and the industry within the process, without expertise on the matter. The quadruple helix looks pretty poor: the co-operation between public agents, industry and R&D is modest, due to the lack of confidence and offer adjusted to conditions. Moreover, currently there is no explicit sport strategy at the regional level, which could provide structural framework or context to the policy making. For instance in the "Development Strategy for the Łódzkie Region 2020" sport is not considered as a separate factor, that could boost the region neither on the business, nor the tourist level. Therefore, better understanding of sports & vitality issues and stronger regional collaboration are required to ensure social development of the region in the forthcoming decade.
2. Relative weakness of organizations that represent industry, business and civil society within sports & vitality sector as a result of unstable financial conditions. Except from VERDE, no deeper cluster co-operation can be observed in the Łódzkie region in the field of sports, and the business environment of sport is disorganized and has not enough resources to provide expertise, representation and aid for companies and start-ups. There are no explicit support mechanisms either for sport clusters nor business environment from the regional Managing Authority.

3. Policy context

The Action Plan aims to impact:

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

Policy instrument addressed:

Regional Operational Programme for Lodzkie Region for the years 2021-2027 (under preparation)
Development Strategy for the Lodzkie Region 2030 (under preparation)

The policy context and the contribution to improve the policy instrument

For both of the Policy Instruments mentioned above, the owner is the Managing Authority, which is the Marshal's Office for the Lodzkie Region, a regional self-government responsible for strategical planning and implementation of the ROP. From the very beginning of the I4S project, VERDE Foundation has been in close collaboration with the MA in relation to policy making. In particular, 2 departments are of VERDE's special interest: Dep. of Regional Policy and Dep. of Sports and Tourism. In 2018, 2019 and 2020 several meetings have been held with project managers, heads of units and directors of these departments, which results in good understanding of common goals and possible actions. Close and good collaboration from the Phase I of the project seems to be a good prognostic for the Phase II and its possibilities to achieve policy changes, proposed in the Action Plan.

The policy making approach on sports & innovation is organized top-down, basing on the circumstances given:

- The ROP 2021-2027 will be signed as a result of consultations between Polish government, the European Commission and the Managing Authority,
- It has to follow general EU guidelines for public policy for the programming period,
- Progress has to be reported to the European Commission based on agreed indicators,
- Any significant change has to be consulted with the government and the Commission.

Due to the construction of the EU funds operations, which follow the budget perspectives, current operation under the ROP 2014-2020 is coming to its end, as the Programme itself will shut down on December 31, 2020 (with possibility to continue spending until December 31, 2023). As a result of previous years' allocations and the COVID-19 extra anti-pandemic measures, no calls proper for sports industry or clusters are scheduled until the end of the Programme, so it has not been mentioned as an addressed PI. However, certain limited impact is still possible under this Instrument during (2021-2023) the implementation of projects, launched by previous calls, and also by VERDE's participation in the ROP evaluation process.

Thus, VERDE aims at influencing PIs for the next decade: the new Regional Development Strategy and the new ROP 2021-27.

Concerning the 2 mentioned new PIs, their current status is following:

- Regional Operational Programme for Lodzkie Region for the years 2021-2027 is under preparation, with expected delay to be signed, which is a result of both the pandemic situation and ongoing political debate at the top EU level. Its draft version has not been yet published for public consultation. As a general rule, the new ROP, as well as other regional development investments will strongly focus on objectives 1 and 2 of European priorities for the forthcoming decade, which are: "Smarter Europe" and "Greener, carbon-free Europe". 65% to 85% of ERDF and Cohesion Fund

resources will be allocated to these priorities. First calls under the ROP 2021-2027 are expected at the earliest in 2022, with a total budget of c.a. 2 billion EUR.

- Development Strategy for the Łódzkie Region 2030 is also under preparation, but more advanced: public consultations of the Strategy took place in December 2019 – January 2020 and the final version of the document should be delivered and accepted in early 2021. The DS is the top policy document of the strategic level, which sets the agenda of regional policy-making for the forthcoming decade. It is a milestone in defining the ROP, and under the next ROP 2021-27 each call for proposals will have to be in line with its objectives, including any action towards innovation. The timeframe is however wider than the ROP itself, which additionally proves its more relevant position in relation to other PIs. The PI has no operational budget, as it is a strategy-defining document. It will be implemented via several other PIs of lower level.

Being at the very edge of the new EU financial framework and going outside of the ROP 2014-2020 regulations, major long-term aims of the VERDE Foundation are:

- To impact the regional policy making for sport & vitality, planned to be adopted for the decade 2020-2030, which shall prove that the policy-makers become aware of the existing role of sport as development factor and make it one of horizontal pillars of economic and social change,
- To impact the forthcoming PI for the EU budget 2021-2027, which is the next Regional Operational Programme for the Łódzkie region, so that it recognizes sport & vitality in its calls and criteria.

The problems mentioned above are challenging but provide some remarkable potential to put in place proper structures and actions, that will change the regional policy making by: a/ building wide coalition for sports & vitality, b/ strengthening the business environment, including its financial side.

To sum up, desired changes to be achieved under PIs are both better management and new projects development. They are reflected in self-defined performance indicators, described under each action.

3. Action 1: Setting up the Łódzkie Sports Network

Key lessons learnt during the Inno4Sports project for VERDE and the Managing Authority of the Łódzkie region are: 1/ significance of proper leadership in building and upkeep regional coalition for sports & innovation and 2/ key importance of equal position of both bottom-up and top-down approaches in policy-making.

VERDE has identified these challenges in the Łódzkie region as structural barriers to boost innovation in sports. Solution for the regional state of affairs is on the other hand offered by good practices (GPs) from partner regions, especially from Lapland, where similar issue has been targeted by the Regional Council.

Regional Council of Lapland is a public organisation, which is funded by the municipalities of Lapland. It has some tasks appointed by law and some development tasks that need the regional level activities (such as sport).

The Arctic Sports Network (the ASN) is a concept proposed by the Regional Council and operates daily to ensure the position of sport & vitality as one of key sectors of regional economy within the bottom-up

framework. Arctic Sport Network combines Lappish sports actors from different sectors including private sector, civil society, government and education and research institutions. The network works as an innovation ecosystem, and it aims in developing business opportunities as well as well-being of the Lappish people.

Before the ASN was set up, the development of sport sector has been mainly done by Lapland University of Applied Sciences (which is still now deeply involved in the process), some secondary education organisations and municipalities. There hasn't been so much shared agenda and everyone has developed sport sector based on their own needs. The aim of the ASN initiative was to bring these actors together in order to increase the effectiveness of development activities in the whole region.

The implementation of smart specialisation strategy in Lapland is done through Arctic Smartness collaboration, so the S3. Arctic Smartness is the cooperation of several local development, research and education organisations. Arctic Smartness is basically a label for all the S3 actions in the region, there is no legal form. To put it simply it's a network where different actors and organisations share knowledge and implement projects in order to reach the goals of the smart specialisation strategy.

Background

Good practice

Strong regional coalition for sports and vitality is a good practice learnt from the Lappish regional council (Arctic Sport Network). It answers our top need – active public policy towards sport and also better participation of quadruple helix partners within the process of policy making.

Arctic Sport Network is a part of the Arctic Smartness collaboration, as it has been learnt during the IE in Lapland in September/October 2019. The network doesn't have any legal form, the idea is that it is open for everyone. The main actors at the moment are the Regional Council, Lapland University of Applied Sciences, Lapland Sport Federation, Santasport (Lapland Sports Academy) and University of Lapland. With this coordination group, thematic meetings are being held, where different actors can meet and share ideas and experiences. The aim is to bring different actors together to collaborate and implement projects.

An inspiration for one of specific steps of the AP ("Launching an online cooperation platform") has been taken also from the region of Lapland: it is the concept of webinars "Sport during and after Corona-virus", described in the operational plan by the Lapland University of Applied Sciences and launched in September 2020.

Basically, this GP works as a good example about the process of defining good solutions for businesses developed in a regional setting. The aim of the project is to provide practical solutions to the issue of doing sport (and sport events) during and after Corona-virus, in particular how to deal with new operating environments (digital environments, teleworking, teleworking and services) and this new difficult situation. The measures undertaken within the GP are: 1/ workshops (4 webinars), each with a specific theme and each with specific methodology and scientific approach (developed by the LUAS researchers), 2/ exchange of good practices and solutions to new challenges, done during the workshops and constantly afterwards, within the established collaboration of quadruple helix parties. All this is done under supervision of the LUAS, which finetunes and coordinates the PPs interactions. The GP allows interaction with participants and partly

functions as a range of brokerage & matchmaking events. It provides added value from participants through their pitches, but also added value for participants' own businesses.

The lesson learnt could be implemented in the region by setting up the Lodzkie Sport Network, being a platform for consultation, learning and sharing ideas among quadruple helix actors, with a general goal of improving the quality of decision making process at the regional management level, basing on better understanding of the role and significance of sports & vitality sector.

Putting in place this kind of collaboration in the Lodzkie region would contribute very much to stronger and more vivid life of the sport & vitality stakeholders in the forthcoming decade, especially in the (post-)COVID-19 reality.

(The action implementation can be partly carried out under policy instruments like the ROP 2014-2020 within the process of evaluation, in which VERDE aims to take part, the evaluation is expected to be in line with the preparations for the 2021-2027 strategical and financial planning).

Action steps and activities

The action will be defined by putting in place a platform for ongoing consultation and dialogue process among regional sport & vitality actors within the quadruple helix model.

Basing on its cluster-building experiences, VERDE emphasises the role of stronger collaboration and participation of the MA in this process to develop common understanding of sport as cross-sectoral driver of excellence. As a consequence, it would provide the MA with tools and knowledge in order to improve policy making and introduce policy change. Also, stronger and much wider participation of other quadruple helix partners is required by involving industry, civil society and academia institutions.

Moreover, a need has been identified to hold a platform for regular synergies of sports environment of the region through annual conferences and online tools

Action step 1: Organising meetings with stakeholders (SMEs, start-ups, NGOs, other BEIs) and developing them into a structured sports network. At first, these meetings will focus on industry and businesses, and later on shall be developed to reach other quadruple helix parties, like academia and especially public administration and regional policy makers.

- Responsible: VERDE
- Resources: own resources / joint partnership European projects (funded by i.e. Erasmus +)
- Timeline: 2021 (twice per year)

Action step 2: Arranging workshop for the MA (in particular: mid- and high level policy makers: heads of units, directors, presidency of the MA if possible) and stakeholders on the common understanding of the role of sports & vitality for the regional development. Topic & technical arrangements of the workshop shall be designed at the later stage, with participation of external service providers.

- Responsible: VERDE
- Resources: own resources / joint partnership European projects (funded by i.e. Erasmus +)
- Timeline: Q3 2021

Action step 3: Organising high-level meeting & conference for the MA decision makers and stakeholders on the following theme: sports, vitality and active lifestyle as key factors of regional development in the (post-) COVID-19 era. The conference is supposed to be a capacity building step through which invited parties obtain, improve, and retain the skills, knowledge, tools and other resources needed to do their jobs more competently in the area of sports & vitality at the regional level. Further technical arrangements of the step shall be designed at the later stage, with participation of external service providers.

- Responsible: VERDE
- Resources: Regional funds – Verde + MA cooperation; it is also possible that other institution is involved (or in charge) of this step. For instance, in Lapland (PP6) it is the University of Applied Science.
- Timeline: Q3 2021

Action step 4: Launching an online cooperation platform (dedicated to a/ provide forum of ongoing collaboration among sports stakeholders and b/ provide support mechanisms via an online community to disseminate regionally developed solutions for businesses in the sports & innovation sector to change their business models, facing the unprecedented situation of (post-)COVID-19). The platform will be launched via an updated VERDE's website, with new functionalities added, with active use of social media to extend the community.

- Responsible: VERDE
- Resources: own resources, Regional funds – Verde + MA cooperation / joint partnership European projects (funded by i.e. Erasmus +)
- Timeline: 2022

Action step 5: Submission to the MA of a bunch of proposals on how to improve the PIs addressed. It shall be a detailed document, based on data collected from the stakeholders (through meetings, conference, workshop and online platform), which should indicate how to shape the regional policy by means of the PIs, so that it recognizes sports & vitality as an important engine of regional development.

- Responsible: VERDE
- Resources: own resources
- Timeline: Q2 2022

NOTE! Close collaboration with the MA will be required at each action step. Although VERDE is the responsible driving organisation for every step, the MA (and its staff, including decision makers) should actively take part to make sure that the conclusions of the Action are introduced into its practice and strategical planning, especially given that Action 1 is a Type 2 policy change, to reach change in the management of the PI.

Important steps have been already undertaken by the VERDE Foundation to achieve this policy change and first results have been obtained.

In January 2020, VERDE submitted to the MA a bunch of proposals on how to improve the Development Strategy for the Lodzkie Region 2030 so that it recognizes the significance of sport & vitality. Out of the 6 proposals:

- 3 were accepted by the MA and will be included in the DS,
- 1 will be partially included,
- 1 will not be included
- 1 "is already reflected in other provisions of the strategy".

The accepted proposals concern:

- supporting and developing cluster initiatives, both in the area of traditional economic sectors and industries, as well as in cross-sectoral areas (so-called crossovers),
- supplementing the presented analysis of the health situation in the region with data regarding sport activity as a factor and stimulator of good psychophysical condition of the community,
- supplementing the Integrated Strategic Ventures with the venture "Physically Active Region".

The partly accepted proposal concerns:

- including among the identified strategic challenges until 2030 also "Developing sports and recreation infrastructure".

As an outcome of the VERDE's participation in the consultation process, the mentioned 3 (4) recommendations will be included in the DS and is a Type 2 policy change: change in the management of the policy instrument.

Also, in order to fulfil the project indicators, VERDE submitted a list of proposals to the MA (in particular, to the Director of the Department of Regional Policy), which could be relevant to the future PIs. The list of recommendations included:

1. Development, adoption and implementation of the regional sports & vitality strategy,
2. Setting sport as a development factor in regional documents,
3. Ensuring adequate financing for sport enterprises,
4. Ensuring favourable conditions for undertaking and developing business activity in the area of sport by strengthening business environment institutions (BEI),
5. Providing funding opportunities and better competences of sport activists - NGOs, coaches, etc.

Recommendations have been partly accepted and currently are under consideration to fit them into the regional policy framework 2021-2027.

Goals of the action

Key action goals include strengthening the cooperation among involved parties (sport & vitality regional stakeholders) and developing common understanding of challenges to improve policy making and better management.

Self-proposed indicators:

- Quantitative:
 - o Number of organisations involved from the quadruple helix model: 10

- Number of project applications submitted (concerning the mass sport industry): 2
- Roadmap/recommendations for regional sport development: 5
- Number of recommendations implemented: 3
- Number of MA personnel that improve their knowledge on sports & vitality role due to the workshop: 5
- Qualitative:
 - Actively functioning network, which reached the critical mass of quadruple helix parties and is able to influence regional policy making
 - Annual sports conference as forum for regional quadruple helix knowledge exchange
 - Increased understanding of sport relevance on the regional level, especially among decision makers of the MA
 - Roadmap put in place for the decision maker, with specific targets to be reached in the Lodzkie region within the sports sector

Policy Change

The aim of Action 1 is Type 2 policy change: change in the management of the PI. Proposed action is meta-level support for the implementation of the PIs addressed. In relation to the PI and background situation described, the improved governance is forecasted to be achieved under future calls in the next ROP, based partly on the new Regional Development Strategy, which includes the recommendations for the policy making presented by VERDE. In particular, the policy change will be reflected in:

- New selection procedures under ROP calls, which recognize the role of sport as development factor,
- Extending list of potential beneficiaries on clusters,
- Providing possibilities of financial assistance to sports & vitality environment organisations.

The aimed policy change shall take place through:

- stronger stakeholders' collaboration, in particular - of the industry and business,
- better understanding of the role of sports industry for the regional development by the policy makers,
- better cooperation of quadruple helix parties via meeting, conferences and online tools.

Launching ongoing dialogue platform will become a new driving force for dynamic regional development and should create a platform for long-term participatory processes. Establishing this kind of platform is necessary for regional sport actors to become enablers, networkers and partners in bottom-up development processes. Top-down solutions should be replaced by endogenous bottom-up capacity building.

Consideration of future forecasting, trends and signals will be improved, and development policies geared from immediate needs of project administrators to exploring long-term opportunities through crowdsourcing processes so that instead of one-time interventions, networking would become a cumulative process.

4. Action 2: Launching an incubation & acceleration hub for better diffusion and visibility of new ways of financing for sports & vitality

Concerning the field of innovation funding, key lessons learnt during the Inno4Sports project (via IE/KCS, online meetings, business case studies...) for VERDE are: 1/ Important role of strong business environment institutions, which provide assistance (financial, technical, know-how) to the industry and start-ups within the sports sector, 2/ Proper financial frameworks for the industry, which takes into account specificity of the sports sector (like cross-overs) and is capable of delivering funds from the public and private.

Within the framework of the new EU perspective, VERDE aims at developing its activities as a business environment institution (BEI) by launching an action of holding an incubation & acceleration hub. Its core job would be to support SMEs by directing assistance under the ROP towards sports-related businesses as well as to make sure that they get proper coaching, consulting and accommodation services to enable growth for regional innovation.

The business environment for sports industry in the Lodzkie region is hardly existing. Sport, being a very much cross-sectoral field of activity, has no supporting organisations of its own under current state of affairs. VERDE identified that there is a strong demand for such support and representation, as sport & vitality becomes a rapidly growing factor of development. Moreover, the observed socio-economic change forces the quadruple helix actors to adjust their offer towards smarter and more innovative solutions. New ways of aid are becoming a must considering the start-up and spin-off enterprises, which do not follow traditional schemes, based only on public grants. Diversified approach to financing and expertise has to be put in place.

Background

Good practice

The good practice of the South-Netherlands region forms bases to this action. According to lessons learnt during the IE in Eindhoven, in South Netherlands there is a strong financial framework that supports activities of sports industry, R&D projects and NGOs, including clusters. Good example here could be:

- the OP SN and its strategic financial approach via RIS3: the Programme is focused on two main priorities, of which the first one is to increase the research and innovation intensity in SMEs and improve their uptake of innovation. The RIS3 strategy of the region is clearly focusing on cross-overs between relevant top sectors. Sports and vitality is seen as an interesting cross over that provides interesting chances for new business. RIS 3 states that the clue to smart specialisation is the clusters: In addition to the efforts to be made on existing clusters, the region's strategy is to further develop a number of new or emerging clusters and promote cross-overs between clusters,

- The Vitality Living Lab project (14 partners working in a consortium, in a mix of field labs, knowledge institutes and companies, led by the S&T Cluster, Eindhoven) which aims to develop a globally unique ecosystem for innovation and business creation within the domain of sport and vitality,
- HighTechXL – program co-funded originally by the Province of North Brabant and regional development agencies (Brabant Development Organisation, Brainport Development); now managed independently, with sponsor support from financial sector and business contractors to develop new ideas and start-ups.

Currently, in the Lodzkie region there is no financial framework that would contribute to fund either entrepreneurs in the field of sports & vitality, or cluster organisations. The ROP does not recognize sport as a specific factor of development, neither it allows covering cluster spending (contrary to the budget period 2007-13). As a result, the business environment institutions that work for the interest of sports sector are struggling both in terms of financial resources and expertise capacities. This leads the region to miss development opportunities covered in the sport industry, being a cross-sectoral, multidisciplinary area of business creation. The start-up and spin-off environment potential is very much under-performing.

For this reason and basing on international GPs, VERDE identified that the business environment for sports & vitality must be strengthened. There is a need to set up an incubation & acceleration hub for sport industry, mostly start-ups, which would provide them with financial assistance as well as professional knowledge on business development.

The action implementation is very unlike to be carried out under existing policy instruments due to the forthcoming closure of the 2014-2020 ROP. Thus, the project development is scheduled to be implemented under the next ROP (2021-2027), within the framework of support for the business environment institutions, which is expected to be launched, similarly to the Measure 2.1.2 of the current ROP (NOTE! the general line of possible calls has been already put in place under the 2014-2020 budget, so good practices can be used / developed in the new ROP).

Action steps and activities

All the action activities lead to the creation, market introduction and diffusion of new business environment tools, dedicated to the sports & vitality sector, with particular attention to the SMEs, start-ups and spin-offs. The hub is a regional innovation ecosystem that combines quadruple helix stakeholders. It offers services to SMEs and supports the maturation and technology transfer and knowledge towards applications in society and industry.

Action step 1: Developing of an incubation & acceleration hub concept in consultation with the MA and regional sport stakeholders. The hub core activities are scheduled to be following:

- becoming a middleman in funding transfers from the public (i.e. the ROP) or the private (venture capital, private equity) to the sports industry, especially SMEs and start-ups,
- providing knowledge transfer for the academia and experienced businesses to the market, especially concerning the know-how on how to deal with the pandemic crisis,

- promoting the public-private partnerships via living labs, which generates testing facilities and data (opportunity mapping), stimulates innovation and SME take up of services and technologies and scale up and attract investors.
- Responsible: VERDE
- Resources: Regional funds – Verde + MA cooperation / joint partnership European projects (funded by i.e. Erasmus +)
- Timeline: Q1-Q2 2021

Action step 2: Submission of project application, aimed to provide funding for operations of the incubation & acceleration hub under the ROP 2021-2027.

- Responsible: VERDE and/or other actors (NOTE! VERDE is not supposed to be the only applicant under potential ROP call)
- Resources: Regional funds – Verde + MA cooperation / joint partnership European projects (funded by i.e. Erasmus +)
- Timeline: Q3-Q4 2021 (depending on the actual calls under the ROP)

Action step 3: Connecting to the EU partnership level through existing channels (i.e. EPSI membership or European Network of Innovation Hubs)

- Responsible: VERDE and/or other actors at the European level
- Resources: own resources plus joint partnership European projects (funded by i.e. Erasmus +)
- Timeline: Q2-Q4 2021

Action step 4: Connecting to regional academia partnerships through existing channels (most likely – the Technical University of Lodz, already being part of the SG)

- Responsible: VERDE
- Resources: own resources
- Timeline: Q2-Q4 2021

Goals of the action

By launching Action 2, VERDE plans to introduce to the market new assistance opportunities and innovative solutions, available to end users, which should help to define sport & vitality as a driving force for regional development and excellence.

Self-proposed indicators:

- Qualitative indicators:
 - Number of partners committed to the incubation/acceleration hub project: 3
 - Number of stakeholders committed to the project: 3
 - Number of project applications for the incubation hub: 1
 - Amount of funding received: 100 000 EUR
- Quantitative indicators:
 - Functioning of hub

Policy Change

The aim of Action 1 is Type 1 policy change: implementation of new projects. Under the current ROP there are no more calls foreseen for 2020, which would allow to influence the PI and could be a financial source for the operations of the proposed hub. Measure II.1.2 (Business consultancy services) could be a perfect option, but as mentioned, no calls are scheduled for 2020. Therefore, taking part in similar calls under the ROP for the Lodzkie Region 2021-27 (first calls scheduled for the Q1 2021) seems the best option. Alternatively, VERDE aims at participating in multiregional projects at the European level, being part of consortium of partners, dedicated to reach common goal. In this way, the operations of the incubation & acceleration hub could be ensured from different sources: regional funds, multiregional projects, own resources, national resources for NGOs and clusters.

Providing financial framework for industry and clusters under the next EU budget period would improve innovation delivery policies as a) it would boost R&D projects related to sports & vitality (for instance, spin-off companies from the Technical University of Lodz under existing technology transfer programmes; other potential possibility is take part in a wider transregional project concept of a European incubation & acceleration by EPSI) and b) it would ensure that clusters have stable financial background and can focus on their core actions.

Thanks to the existing strong collaboration with the MA, VERDE has a unique occasion to label the policy-making process by submitting its proposals.

As the main SG member is the regional authority responsible for the policies, VERDE is convinced about the feasibility of transferring knowledge acquired from the interregional knowledge exchange into the regional structures.