TARTU SCIENCE PARK
Home of Business

Improving Structural Funds for better delivery of R&D&i policies

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Tartu Science Park

Project overview

IMPROVE
Interreg Europe

European Union
European Regional Development Fund

Research & innovation

Policy instrument

The main aim of the policy instrument Development Plan of Tartu City 2018-2025 is to develop city of Tartu as knowledgeable, smart, entrepreneurial, inspiring, caring and creative city. Tartu is an academic city which aims to increase its overall entrepreneurial activity and reduce the gap compared with capital, including raising its attractiveness both as entrepreneurship and living environment within Estonia and internationally.

Policy has defined five strategic sub-sectors of which in IMPROVE project Tartu Science Park is tackling two, especially the second:
3.1. Tartu as knowledgeable and academic city.
3.2. Tartu as smart entrepreneurial city.

Within strategic goal 3.2. there are following sub-objectives:
1. Development of innovation and growth capacity of entrepreneurship
2. Development of human resource
3. Development of business support system & infrastructure
4. Support for internationalization of entrepreneurship
5. Development of entrepreneurial culture and reputation of entrepreneurship

In order to reach the desired outcome where Tartu has competitive and sustainable enterprises, high-tech economy and is the best place to start a business and attractive investment environment, the Structural Funds (SF) has been defined as a key instrument to develop R&D&I. Smart and efficient use of SF is vital for long-term success of policy and the city. Policy in hand is aligned with national Smart Specialization Strategy and structural funds programmes but could be improved to be fully impactful.

Good practices

ADAPTER is a free service created by the Estonian R&D community, to offer simple access to the best of Estonian R&D for all SMEs and organizations.

If SMEs or organizations are looking for an answer that scientists, engineers or other experts might be able to answer, or are looking for partners to develop

a new product or service, or need a specific measuring device, want to analyze or test something, then the fastest and easiest way to find the answer is to contact an ADAPTER network with 18 partners in R&D sector.

ADAPTER is a free service created by the Estonian research and development (R&D) community, to offer simple access to the best of Estonian R&D for all companies and organizations.

With a single message, SMEs and organizations can reach more than 3500 scientists and engineers within the ADAPTER network. From sound design to biotech and from product development to market research.

Link to the good practice:
https://www.interregeurope.eu/policylearning/good-practices/item/5593/adapter/

University of Tartu (UT) spin-off program is for UT students and (non) academic staff to commercialize their potential (deep tech) business idea.

The University of Tartu offers its scientists and students a developing program for knowledge-based enterprises. The program is designed for UT researchers, employees and students, who have a knowledge-based and/or escalating idea. Program is outlined in 6 months phases with maximum duration of 3 years. Program offers training, business and science mentoring and coaching services, IP analyse and due diligence, team building, networking and opportunities for financing, including promotional events and activities.

The program strengthens deep tech ecosystem and contributes to the value chain of creating university spin-offs with the main stakeholders being incubation centres and venture capitalists (funds).
In order to strengthen the flow from basic research to market Proof of Concept (PoC) funding was first created in 2019 and within three years UT has provided the funding of 900 K for 31 projects in the University of Tartu. About half of the researchers who apply for the spin-off program have received the PoC funding. This proves that the PoC together with the UT spin-off program is a successful approach for commercialization of science-based ideas and technology.

Link to the good practice:
https://www.interregeurope.eu/policylearning/good-practices/item/5629/university-of-tartu-ut-spin-off-program/

Specific issues and areas of improvement

The improvement in the management and implementation of Structural Funds by means of the exchange of knowledge and experience with other regions/countries will increase the effectiveness of R&D&I support public policies based on a better and more sustainable use of resources, better decision-making processes and a more effective governance and evaluation of the actions undertaken.

Focus areas for improvement are:

- Focus on Smart City

Connection with policy instrument: how to design/adapt policy instrument to include rapid technological advancements while considering and meeting related cultural, legal, societal, and environmental challenges.

- Focus on deep-tech and smart economy

Connection with policy instrument: how to adapt policy instrument to align and involve interests of several different stakeholders who operate with different pace and methods. Notably academia and industry. How can policy instrument encourage and empower emergence of new high value-added jobs and enterprises while respecting autonomy and decision-making of HEI's and private companies.

- Improved monitoring system of policy instrument

Connection with policy instrument: Background here being that in digital, data-based information age there is an opportunity to gather huge amount of data. How to do it resource-efficiently, in automated or semi-automated manner, in timely fashion and translate that data into meaningful decision-making tool?

- Better coordination and synergy between actors

Connection with policy instrument: While in some areas community and different stakeholders are working together well and in coordinated manner, there are areas where there is room for improvement. There are gaps and occasional conflict situations between academia and industry, "traditional" industry and start-up ecosystem, "traditional" industry and environmentally conscious citizens. City government is often looked at to act as intermediator in such situations. Policy instrument could provide guiding direction and act as commonly accepted vision of future.

Identified solutions to specific issues

Lessons relevant for Tartu region from other project partners would be:

- Deep-tech and smart economy - how can policy instrument encourage and empower emergence of new high value-added jobs and enterprises.
- Know-how of how other regions monitor and improve their existing policy measures.
- The effective management and coordination of available infrastructures.

The good practices and/or solutions identified from other regions

#1 PP2 DEV'UP Centre-Val de Loire CVL (France)

- **GP**: **Animation of the EDP to strengthen the ecosystem of environmental management**
  Facilitation of the entrepreneurial discovery process to strengthen an ecosystem of a RIS3 priority in the Centre Val de Loire region
  https://www.interregeurope.eu/policylearning/good-practices/item/5423/animation-of-the-edp-to-strengthen-the-ecosystem-of-environmental-management/
- **GP: Management of the EDP at the S3 priority level through the setting up of steering committees**
  https://www.interregeurope.eu/policylearning/good-practices/item/5424/management-of-the-edp-at-the-s3-priority-level-through-the-setting-up-of-steering-committees/

Also, PP6 is interested in:

- Economic Development Agency, ecosystem coordination
- CVL economic developer network
- Ambition Research Development (ARD) initiative

Gap/need highlighted in Regional State of the Art that can be solved by this good practice/ instrument/ initiative:

- ✓ Deep-tech and smart economy - how can policy instrument encourage and empower emergence of new high value-added jobs and enterprises.
- ✓ The effective management and coordination of available infrastructures.

Aspects that make this good practice/ instrument/ initiative transferable:

- The transfer potential about the articulation between different policy instruments: clusters, research and development programs and governance and structuring actions such as RIS3 priority steering committees, and other cross-cutting measures.
- How to strengthen the governance and coordination dynamics of the ecosystem within the priorities.
- How to explore new niches and market potential, as well as areas of scientific and technological opportunity.
- How to encourage innovation projects within the priorities and strengthen the ecosystem by providing "fertile ground" for them.
- Incubators: the incubator Les champs du possible.

#2 PP1 Foundation FUNDECYT Science and Technology Park of Extremadura (FUNDECYT-PCTEX) (Spain)

- **GP: Innovation and Talent Programme**

Integrated training and employment Programme for young graduates linked to innovative activities in strategic knowledge areas for smart specialisation.

https://www.interregeurope.eu/policylearning/good-practices/item/5449/innovation-and-talent-programme/

Also, PP6 is interested in:

- Synergies to boost specialisation: The High Technology Incubator in Bioeconomy and Circular Economy of Extremadura;
- RIS3 participatory monitoring and Open data

Gap/need highlighted in Regional State of the Art that can be solved by this good practice/ instrument/ initiative:

- ✓ Deep-tech and smart economy - how can policy instrument encourage and empower emergence of new high value-added jobs and enterprises.
- ✓ The effective management and coordination of available infrastructures.
- ✓ Know-how of how region monitors their existing policy measures.

Aspects that make this good practice/ instrument/ initiative transferable:

- Cooperation model linking the company, the University and the Research Centres, and promoted by the Public Administration.
- Development of innovative projects in strategic areas that generate employment.

- Integrated training program and employment actions linked to the change of the production model and the requirements of innovative activities in strategic knowledge areas for smart specialisation.

Main stakeholders involved in the project

- Regional authority and policy owner, Tartu City Government, especially its Entrepreneurship department.
  Tartu City is the most important stakeholder in IMPROVE project as they are directly responsible for policy addressed. They are also the body who is going to benefit most from the Action Plan. They will be key partner in implementation phase.
- Academia (University of Tartu).
  Universities and vocational schools are the main source for future workforce and entrepreneurs. Two major universities are in Tartu: University of Tartu and Estonian University of Life Sciences.
- Business support organizations (sTARTUp Tartu).
  Especially regional business advisory organizations which operate as main partners for ministry by implementing policy measures.
- Clusters, Competence & Technology Development Centres.
  One of key partners of ministries and key beneficiaries of support measures which are focused on increasing the innovation and other R&D activities.
- Startups and SMEs.
- Angel investors.