Project Acronym: SMART-SPACE

Project title: ASP478

D.T1.3.3.
Benchmarking Report

WP n°:	T1: The digital revolution to support AS innovation and growth
Task n°:	Activity A.T1.3.3
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Type:	**R - Report**
Dissemination level:	**<PU = public>**
Revision:	**Final**
Due Date:	**30.04.2017**
Date of submission:	**09.05.2017**

Deliverable History

This deliverable history should be removed from the document once it has been finalized. It can then be stored as a separate document on the server, next to the final version.

Version	Date	Status	What's new?
001	28.04.2017	Draft01	Initial Draft of the delivery
002	04.05.2017	Draft02	Compiling and categorizing the gathered information
003	09.05.2017	Draft03	Implementing PP feedback
004	09.05.2017	Final01	Finalizing the Deliverable D.T1.3.3 Competence Analysis

Executive Summary

37 questionnaires from the following intermediary organizations and their competences have been collected:

- Chambers of commerce
- Clusters, networks
- Regional development agencies
- Lobby organizations, regional/national associations
- Regional business promotion agencies
- Incubators
- Ministries, government offices

They give us a very good overview of the great variation of intermediary organizations within the PP regions in AS:

Awareness raising measures by offering Information and organizing events and workshops is the most popular practice. We see an average of 350 SMEs reached per intermediary, most of the intermediary organizations started their activities the field in 2013. Most progress in the field of digitalization has been made since 2015.

The overview of questionnaires also shows more interesting facts:

New intermediaries are in development. The intermediary organizations are structured differently: 43% generalist, 38% hybrid, 19% specialist. 50% have a very good knowledge of grant & incentive programs, 88% know of "Science & business cooperation projects".

Participating intermediary organizations expressed the following needs: 25,5% more awareness & education; 21,5% more funding; 17,5% EU benchmark creation, standard of comparison.

Contents

1. Introduction

The task aims at the involvement of the intermediary organization (public and private organizations in charge to assist SMEs: Clusters, Chambers of Commerce, Technological Parks, Sectoral Agencies, R&TT agencies, etc.) to analyse their competence and attitude towards smart technologies, to identify a list of competence ("digital support operator" profile) required and to be provided with training actions and to set up of local networks of intermediates for the project activities. P6 resp; All PPs involved

2. Objective of investigation/objective of the deliverable

The ultimate objective of this delivery (D.T1.3.3), which is part of the activity on "Intermediaries to strengthen the digitization of AS SMEs" (A.T1.3) is to gain valuable intel on competences, practices and methods used by Intermediaries and summarize the results for future reviewing. The competency on the smart technologies and related services these intermediaries provide, as well as their expectations in terms of overall support by the Project and the Public Institutions is of particular interest.

3. Applied approach/methodology adopted

First, questionnaires were created in order to interview intermediaries with the intention to capture key information about their competencies, provided related services and expectations. The results gained by the interviews held were returned, analysed and summarized. In order to be able to provide standardized results suitable for proper comparison a Word template was created. Furthermore, due to the heterogenic nature of the collected answers, we categorized the answers according to their respective questions. A question requiring a quantitative answer would for example be summarized in lowest till highest, average and or a specific example. This method aims at making the results more readable and comparable.

4. Results

The results will be discussed in the logic order of the questions which can be found the questionnaires.

Awareness raising measures:

What awareness raising measures for smart technologies and digitalization have been taken by your organization?

The 3 most presented measures to raise awareness are events, workshops and different forms of meetings. Mostly aimed at information and consulting, events and meetings are used by almost every intermediary. Events are ranging from small local get together all the way to larger scale events were SMEs, big companies, intermediaries and other interested parties come together. Meetings on the other hand are mostly held privately and aim at consultancy and guidance, or the meetings are organized by the intermediary in order for 2 parties to connects and possibly start a collaboration. Workshop appear in all possible varieties and cannot be generalized. From informational events with hands on practices to dedicated technological educational events, the format workshop is widely used. Upon counting the different intermediaries answers and attributing them to either of these 3 measures, events, workshops and meetings or often not used exclusively. This means that most intermediaries do events, workshops and meetings, while meetings are approximately 30% less popular then events and workshops.

When did you first start working in the field?

The lowest number reported goes back as far as the year of 1999 which refers to digitalization activities and clearly not industry 4.0 measures, while the most recently reported activity started in 2017. In average, intermediaries started their activities in the field around 2013. Many intermediaries reported though, that their work on the subject had already been initiated years ago but only heavily focused on it in the past 2 years. Furthermore, according to the numbers most progress in the field was made since 2015.

Can you give us the number of SMEs you have reached so far with awareness raising measures?

The amount of SEMs reached obviously depends dramatically on the size, lifetime and overall activities of the individual intermediaries and the results reflected this heterogeneity. The lowest reported number of reached SMEs is 11 and the some of the highest goes up to 10000, 20000. Many intermediaries also were not able to give an exact number of reached SMEs, either due to their respective form of reaching SMEs or due to being a very new intermediary. Excluding some of the higher numbers (20.000, 10.000, 6.000) the average orbits around 350 SMEs reached by individual intermediaries.

Grant & incentive programs:

Do you know of any grant/incentive programs offered for SMEs in your region that plan to take digitalization measures?

Only approximately 11% of Intermediaries reported not to know any grant/incentive programs offered for SMEs. Arround 50% of intermediaries reported to know several programs. The rest reported of 1 to 3 programs known to them.

Do you know how many SMEs already participated in those grant/incentive programs?

One half of intermediaries reported, again very heterogenic results ranging from 0 SMEs that participated to over 5000 SMEs that participated. The other half, little over 50% reported not to have any information on that regard.

Skills & qualifications in your organization:

What are your organization's skills / qualifications in the field of smart technologies? Are your staff members trained in one of the following or other fields of expertise and how detailed is their knowledge?

Key information which has been filtered out of this question's answers was whether the intermediaries are or have experts within their organisation, manly work with experts outside of their organisation or if they use a combination of experts within and outside their organisation. Around 43% reported to mostly or exclusively use experts from outside their organisation in order to cover as many areas of expertise as possible. Around 38% reported to have both specialized experts within their organisation as well as utilizing other specialized experts from outside their organisation. The rest of the reported results (around 19%) referrers to intermediaries that mainly or exclusively, have all necessary areas of expertise covered by experts from within their organisation.

Is your organization offering services for SMEs (for example a digital maturity model etc.)?

Many intermediaries are already offering certain services to SMEs. Most of the services provided are aimed at educating SMEs about the field, provide SMEs with information and or help SMEs asses how advanced their digitalization is and how to improve it. Around 30% of intermediaries reported not to have any specific services that they provide. A part of this 30% stated however, that they are planning to offer services in the near future.

Cooperation projects with research institutions:

Are there any cooperation projects between your organization and research institutions and universities etc.?

A majority of intermediaries, around 74% have reported to have cooperation with research facilities such as institutions and universities. The rest of interviewed intermediaries, 26%, reported to not have any sort of cooperation

Scientific expert knowledge:

What expert knowledge can research institutions and universities etc. in your region provide for the economy?

The answers provided for this question were particularly heterogenic due to the great number of different areas of expertise research facilities all round the alp region can provide. One notable difference in the reported answers was the strong focus on technological expertise sought out by intermediaries. Over 58% of the support offered to intermediaries is of a technological nature. Offered is a variety of different kinds of assistance with a wide range of complexities. Other forms of support that have been reported by intermediaries during the interview revolved around I4.0, manufacturing and giving access to special equipment.

Science & business cooperation projects:

Are there already (partially / publicly funded) cooperation projects between SMEs and those research institutions or cooperation projects between SMEs you know of?

A clear majority, approximately 88%, of intermediaries reported to have partially and or publicly funded cooperation projects between the SMEs and research institutions or cooperation projects between SMEs. Only 12% stated to not have or know of any cooperation of this sort. PP10 (ARDI Rhône Alpes) for instance, reported the following:

"Yes, see few examples below :

Project DRY TO FLY: Smart imbricative eco-3D manufacturing of large size pieces, high economic and environmental performances

(CETIM+ 2 research centers, 3 PME, 1large company)

Project 3D Hybride : New solutions with very high added value to be able to answer to industrial specifications (aeronautic, automotive, energy, medical) directly at the end of additive manufacturing process and avoid or limit post-process treatment.

(Ecole des Mines de Saint-Etienne, 4 research institutions, 1 ETI, 2 PME, 2 Large Companies.)

Project MOULINNOV : Development of innovative high performances moulds for plastic injection, made by Selective Laser Melting (SLM)

(CETIM, ENISE, IPC, 3 research institutions, 5 PME, 1 large Company)"

Needs & requirements:

What are the needs & requirements of your intermediary organization in the field of smart technologies & digitalization in order to be able to properly assist SMEs in your region also in the future? (Qualification & training, etc.)

The answers gathered regarding the needs and requirements of the individual intermediaries were, regarding the infinite possible answers, rather homogenic. In total, we filtered out 6 needs and requirements of intermediaries.

The following categories are listed from most expressed needs to least expressed needs.

1: Awareness & Education (25,5%); **2:** More funding(21,5%); **3:** Creating a EU Benchmark/ Standard of comparison(17,5%); **4:** Creating a better infrastructure for intermediary networks(15,5%); **5:** Advertising intermediaries services and support/ customer acquis (12%); **6:** Strenghening the communication between Big companies and SMEs (8%);

Every interviewee's answer falls in at least 1 of these 6 categories.

5. Evaluation transnational added value

The transnational added value for all intermediary organisations clearly presents itself in providing a general overview, impressions and examples of methods and measures as well as general progress comparison of other intermediary organisations.

It is not uncommon for different intermediary organisations in other regions to develop different methods and habits when it comes to their own organisational structure. It is therefore of critical interest for all intermediary organisations to be able to take a look at other intermediary organisations. It is not only interesting for newer intermediary organisations and those who still have to establish themselves to have a rough frame of reference that they can compare themselves to but also for established and bigger organizations to constantly re-evaluate their services. This way a lot of knowledge and experience is idle.

The provided Q&A gives us a good impression of how similar SMEs' organisational structures are set up which can dramatically improve the growth of newer intermediary organisations and help optimise methods and workflows of already established intermediary organisations.

The interest and usefulness of having such referential material is paramount. It serves as a lighthouse to get a good orientation and overview of successful measures, which can be adapted for each other region in Alpine Space.

6. Outlook and sustainability

Many intermediary organizations are constantly developing, are undergoing changes due to new policy rules or regional strategies. Nevertheless, providing service to SMEs is in the main focus of most of the intermediary organizations.

It seems clear that in most of the regions the topic of digitalization is not just a trend the intermediary organizations are following. Many of the involved organizations claim that they will keep on working in this field for the years to come. On the other hand for some it is a question of funding since some of them are depending on national grants and have to count on national governments to provide the needed funding to keep the

7. Annexes

All success cases are available for detailed consideration.