



CERlecon – CE119

eConcept for an eSmart-strategy for a transnational Network of innovation ecosystems

Deliverable D.T1.3.1

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PP3 Regione del Veneto – Direzione Lavoro / PP4 ENAIP Veneto

1. Project Summary & document introduction

Change is still needed to make the cities and regions in Central Europe better places to work and live. Daring young entrepreneurs with brilliant ideas could contribute considerably to this change. But they can't. Factors such as a lack of an entrepreneurial culture and mind-set leading to a limited interest in entrepreneurship are hampering their efforts. There is also inadequate training to improve their skills and entrepreneurial competences and innovation in general is being hampered by the lingering effects of the historical east-west divide and the recent economic crisis through an underinvestment in R&D.

And yet, entrepreneurs must be empowered to create change; they "form the majority of business entities and are the biggest employers" in Central Europe. "It is important to provide, at regional level, the right mix of financial and non-financial support to assist entrepreneurs to create new firms." "And this is our goal. **By mid-2019, we will contribute to a change in the way entrepreneurs are inspired, trained and supported through a balanced package of strategies, actions plans, pilot actions, training, and tools to create new-type comprehensive regional innovation ecosystems in seven Central Europe regions.** With our three-step logical project approach (Development – Implementation – Improvement), we want entrepreneurs and SMEs to benefit the most from what we do. But also their regions will benefit because from now on regional smart specialization strategies will be further used to develop novel technologies, and brilliant products and services for economic and social innovation." The joint development of all outputs and a transnational network interlinking the regional ecosystems to improve international skills emphasize the project's transnational character. At present, there is presumably no such state-of-the art innovative support scheme in Central Europe. "That is why everything that we do will be transferable for the benefit of others."

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WORK PACKAGE T1 is the strategic starting and finishing point in tackling the common territorial challenges and lays the foundation for the change that CERlecon plans to achieve. It provides the smart strategies that will implement the new-type innovation ecosystems incorporating the six domains (*policy, finance, culture, supports, human capital and markets*) that need to interact for target-oriented SME training (D. Isenberg) in the project regions; **RIS3** is the policy domain. It also provides the strategy for the transnational network interlinking these ecosystems in the project area. T1 will produce two outputs to achieve Project Specific Objective 1.

Results: Output T1.1 - Regional Playparks: eSmart-strategies for regional innovation ecosystems in CE regions through two activities: (1) Concept Development of eSmart-strategies for regional ecosystems in CE regions, which will be tested and evaluated through pilots/activities in T2 & T3, leading to (2) Strategy Finalisation: eSmart-strategies for regional innovation ecosystems in CE regions. Throughout regional policy level stakeholders will be involved to ensure the viability / sustainability of the strategies and the Playparks after project lifetime. Output T1.2: Playparks network: eSmart-strategy for a transnational network of innovation ecosystems in CE regions through two activities: (1) Concept Development of an eSmart-strategy for a transnational network

of innovation ecosystems in CE regions, which will be tested and evaluated through pilots/activities in T2 & T3 leading to (2) Strategy Finalisation: eSmart-strategy for a transnational network of innovation ecosystems in CE regions. Throughout regional policy level stakeholders will be involved. Process-related communication will aim to engage the selected target groups (e.g. policy/support/SME/funding initiatives) as essential partners in output development.

Led by a strong and experienced regional authority (PP3), all project partners will be involved in all WP activities. The WP is logically the basis for the two following thematic WPs.

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DELIVERABLE D. T1.3.1

eConcept for an eSmart-strategy for a transnational Network of innovation ecosystems in CE regions

PP develop an eConcept as a basis for the eStrategy for a transnational Network of innovation ecosystems in Central Europe regions that focuses on links between the regional Playparks and overall transnational network: how they work together and how they complement each other

This document is intended to provide the first framework for the precise definition of the CERlecon Network intended as an **active transnational network of innovation ecosystems in project regions**. More in details this paper is setting the strategy behind the network which focuses on the links between the regional Playparks and the overall network.

This e-Concept has been build-up according to project basic indications and the partners' inputs with the precise goal to set the roadmap for the creation and implementation of the network during project lifetime. ¹ The next step will be settled in Activity A.T2.3 "Development of Pilot action template including links between regional Playparks and the transnational network." ²

¹ According to the Application Form, "in M6, based on the e-Concept (D.T1.3.1) PP develop a working version of the strategy and after testing / evaluating in T2 & T3 finalise the e-Smart-strategy for a transnational network of innovation ecosystems in CE regions in M35" (**Deliverable D.T1.4.1 – e-Smart-strategy for a transnational network of innovation ecosystems in CE regions**)

² Deliverable D.T2.3.1 - *Pilot action template including links between regional Playparks and the transnational network* – "PP develop a pilot action template for innovation ecosystems network implementation with linkages: regional Playparks and Playparks network. The template will be the basis for the regional pilot action leading to the Playpark network"

2. The CERlecon outputs: shaping the Network

“The *regional innovation ecosystems* will provide regional entrepreneurs with ‘the right mix of financial and non-financial support’ to create their new firms and the **network** will provide them with a real European dimension for further development and even to their first business settlements.”³ “A transnational network interlinking the ecosystems will provide entrepreneurs with opportunities to increase their international skills in an international business environment.”⁴

The same definition of the Output⁵ clearly set the fundamental synergy and connection between the Network and the single Playparks: “*The pilot action will demonstrate how the regional Playparks and the overall transnational network work together and complement each other to accelerate SME international growth and create new firms*”.

The following list of project concrete outputs is providing a first reference framework of the Network shape and functions first of all with reference to project activities and deliverables.

Output O.T1.1 - Regional Playparks: e-Smart-strategies for regional innovation ecosystems in CE regions

Based on the initial e-Concepts, tested and evaluated through pilots/activities in T2 & T3, PP, working with policy level stakeholders, produce e-Smart strategies for new-type innovation ecosystems with the six domains (policy, finance, culture, supports, human capital, markets) that need to interact for target-oriented start-up/SME training (*D. Isenberg*). RIS3 is the policy domain. The strategies will include new training methodology and synergies with funding initiatives to create new firms.

Output O.T1.2 - Playparks network: e-Smart-strategy for a transnational Network of innovation ecosystems in CE regions

Based on the initial e-Concept, tested and evaluated through pilots/activities in T2 & T3, PP, working with policy level stakeholders, produce the e-Smart strategy for a transnational Network of innovation ecosystems in CE regions that focuses on links between the regional Playparks and the overall transnational network: how they work together and how they complement each other and how the network can accelerate start-up growth and improve SME internationalisation.

Output O.T2.1 - Regional Playparks: 7x regional pilot actions for innovation ecosystems implementation in PP regions

In this output 7 regional innovation ecosystems (*Playparks*) will be implemented based on regional pilot actions and the e-Concepts (A.T1.1). The pilot actions will demonstrate how the six domains (policy, finance, culture, supports, human capital, markets) that need to interact for target-oriented start-up/SME training (*D. Isenberg*) will be incorporated at regional level. In all cases, RIS3 is the policy domain. They will also demonstrate how funding initiatives will be involved to create new firms.

³ As from the Application Form – Part C1 “Project relevance”

⁴ As from the Application Form – Part C2 “Project focus”

⁵ Output O.T2.2 “Playparks network”

Output O.T2.2 - Playparks network: 1x transnational pilot action for innovation ecosystems network implementation

In this output one transnational network of regional innovation ecosystems (*Playparks Network*) will be implemented based on a transnational pilot action and the e-Concept (A.T1.2). The pilot action will demonstrate how the regional Playparks and the overall transnational network work together and complement each other to accelerate SME international growth and create new firms.

Output O.T2.3 – Playparks network: 1x Joint Playpark staff training

Before work to improve the skills and competences of start-ups and young SMEs commences (T3), at least 21 regional Playpark staff (3+ *per Playpark*) take part in two-stage joint transnational trainings led by an external team of experts (initial training before work at the Playparks starts; augmented training after first Playparks cohort). E-Evaluations by Playpark staff and the training team will lead to the finalisation of the training methodology and materials.

Output O.T2.4 - Playparks network: 1x Training methodology and materials e-Portfolio

An essential element of staff training (O.T2.3) is the methodology and materials that are needed. Based on a mix of previous knowledge (e.g. i.e.SMART) and the specific new knowledge needed for staff at regional innovation ecosystems (not part of i.e.SMART), an e-Portfolio of methodologies and materials will be developed, tested, evaluated and finalised during staff training and made available to other CE regions on the online Playparks network platform (D.T2.4.1)

Output O.T3.1 - Playparks network: 1x transnational business orientation e-Tool (*Playpark xChange*)

In this output, PP with external support will develop and implement a transnational business orientation tool which will simulate a virtual stock exchange providing regional entrepreneurs / young SMEs with the opportunity to 'go public' with the economic and/or social innovation idea / product that they are developing at the regional Playpark. Through the 'real-life' transactions that will take place on the stock exchange, they will be able to adjust and improve their ideas / products for real market entry

Output O.T3.2/3/4 - 1st/2nd/3rd cohort of start-ups / young SMEs training at regional Playparks and in the transnational Network

(3x) 70+ start-ups / SMEs trained at the seven regional Playparks (10+ *per region*) and in the transnational network. Format: potential start-ups / young SMEs are inspired in regional Playpark idea generation laboratories; from these, the 10+ best per region are chosen for a 6-month improvement training. The chosen trainees' (equal female/male) business ideas (equal economic/social innovation) must focus on the national /regional RIS3. Synergies with funding initiatives will support these start-ups / SMEs becoming new firms.

3. The *Transnational Network* concept

I. The *Network* basic concept

“One strategy will implement new-type comprehensive innovation ecosystems, one in every project region. The second strategy will interlink these ecosystems in a transnational network. [...] A transnational network interlinking the ecosystems will provide entrepreneurs with opportunities to increase their international skills in an international business environment.”⁶ “CERlecon will develop and implement smart strategies for regional innovation ecosystems interlinked in a transnational network (*‘a European entrepreneurial ecosystem’*) using RIS3 as the policy basis to advance economic and social innovation to create growth and jobs.”⁷

Following these basic definition as reported in the Application Form, the network has to be seen first of all as a ***transnational joint management unit***⁸ to establish cooperation between the regional Playparks of the project regions (Vienna, Veneto, Stuttgart, Bratislava, Rijeka, Brno and Krakow) having the following basic functions:

- to encourage and support the transnational transfer and synergy of excellent business ideas for both start-ups and newly created businesses;
- to organise a two-stage joint transnational trainings for Playparks’ staff led by an external team of experts (*initial training before work at the Playparks starts and augmented training after first Playparks cohort*);
- to support the organisation and implementation of the 3 cohorts of start-ups / young SMEs training at the regional Playparks and in the joint training session;
- to master the *e-Portfolio of methodologies and materials* which will be developed, tested, evaluated and finalised during staff training and made available to other CE regions on the online Playparks network platform;
- to host contents, materials and tools implemented and used in each single regional Playpark;



⁶ As from the Application Form – Part C2 “Project focus”

⁷ As from the Application Form – Part C3 “Project context”

⁸ The term ‘structure’ could be misleading bringing the idea of some ‘physical environment’ and complicated organisation.

- to support and 'host' the implementation of *online transnational ecosystems network platform*, including the *business orientation e-Tool*;⁹
- to provide networking opportunities for Playpark trainers, regional experts, consultants and mentors aiming at support and bring entrepreneurs from transnational arena together.

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II. The *Network* additional operations and functions

In addition to the basic functions as set on the Application Form, the partners have agreed on the following additional operation and functions (referred also to the supervision / support to each single Playpark):

- each single Playpark has to define the contact / responsible person assuring the continuous connection to the Network;
- 7 mailboxes **directly referred to the project** (*one for each region*) will be activated to provide each Playpark with a formal and direct contact;
- all the Playparks should also start using the CERlecon social media tools to attract emerging entrepreneurs and newly created SMEs, as well as to communicate & disseminate with relevant stakeholders;
- all the Playparks should start using multimedia social networking tools (such as Skype, Google hang-out, etc.) for a more effective connection with the network;
- the *online Playparks network platform* is going to serve as a "virtual Playpark" which will be a common online environment and a basic tool for the network. It will support the interaction with and between trainers and peers via the online platform.

Ultimately the Network has to represent the proper "environment" effectively enabling each single Playpark to concretely "provide entrepreneurs with opportunities to increase their international skills in an international business environment". Thanks to the web and its potentialities and exploiting the Network, each Playpark will be used as "a real gate to fly all over the world to also catch-up ideas and experiences". Each regional structure will be then an "open door" location

⁹ Deliverable **D.T3.1.2** - *Development and implementation of the e-Tool* – "The e-Tool is developed and is part of the initial joint transnational training of Playpark staff (D.T2.5.2) to familiarise staff with its use/potential. It will be then used for improvement trainings at regional Playparks and in the network".

Output O.T3.1 - *1x transnational business orientation e-Tool (Playpark xChange)* – "PP with external support will develop and implement a trans. business orientation tool which will simulate a virtual stock exchange providing regional entrepreneurs / young SMEs with the opportunity to 'go public' with the economic and/or social innovation idea/product that they are developing at the regional Playpark. Through the 'real-life' transactions that will take place on the stock exchange, they will be able to adjust and improve their ideas/products for real market entry".

where young generations and newly entrepreneurs have the possibility to take profit of virtual / real experiences supported by a well trained staff and a fully equipped environment.

At the same time the network will represent a concrete opportunity for letting business ideas, business projects and young SMEs be shared among the 7 partner regions finding out possible synergies and concrete joint operations.

III. The *Network* sustainability

“A project is sustainable when it continues to deliver benefits to the project beneficiaries and/or other constituencies for an extended period after the Commission’s financial assistance has been terminated”.¹⁰

From the outset, CERlecon has planned for the lasting durability of the WP outputs after project lifetime through the institutional sustainability of the partnership architecture. The partnership involves two partner institutions (*political / expert*) per region that are committed to the durability of the strategy and action plans that will be produced. The political partner is a regional / municipal institution and together with the expert partner will have full ownership of the outputs.¹¹

The regional Playparks and the Playparks network, the main outputs of this WP, will not only be **institutionally** (cf. T1) but also **financially sustainable** since the regional PP consortium are the owners. In other words, the infrastructure, the daily running, and the trainer salary costs will be carried by one or by both partners, also after project lifetime. This was clarified in preliminary meetings and will be ensured by regional Letters of Commitment during project lifetime (cf. *Del. T2.2.1*).¹²

After institutional and financial sustainability (*WPT1 / WPT2*), the **political sustainability** will be secured in *WPT3*. The regional political partners will use the outputs to improve their capacities for skills development and their existing policies for entrepreneurial training / support with RIS3 as the basis.¹³

According to the project both the Playpark and the network have to be conceived as permanent ‘systems’ as will be settled in **Deliverable D.T2.2.1** “*Letters of commitment for the sustainability of regional Playparks and the Playparks network*”.¹⁴

During the project implementation the Playpark network management structure will be very light and easy where the **Management Board** will be represented by the project Steering Committee members and each Playpark responsible will form the **Operational Board**. All the project related tools and resources will be then displayed to support each single Playpark action and the whole network operation.

In any case each single partner will be the free to adopt a tailor-made local strategy to ensure a more “visible” and strong future sustainability of its Playpark deciding, for instance, for the inclusion on local incubators, municipal offices, universities, NGOs and so on.¹⁵

¹⁰ *Handbook on Sustainability* - European Commission Directorate-General Education and Culture - © European Communities, 2006.

¹¹ Sustainability and transferability of work package outputs – **WP T1**

¹² Sustainability and transferability of work package outputs – **WP T2**

¹³ Sustainability and transferability of work package outputs – **WP T3**

¹⁴ “The regional partners document their commitment to sustain (*institutionally, financially, politically*) their regional Playparks and the network during and after project lifetime”.

¹⁵ As also provided in Deliverable D.T1.2.8 “*PP final e-Concepts how to involve regional stakeholders (policy level) in CE regions*”



<http://tinyurl.com/CERlecon>

www.interreg-central.eu/CERlecon

