Organizational Coaching Tool

A sharing practice document produced in the Interreg BSR programme project EmpInno

Competency Mapping at Kaunas Science and Technology Park

December 2018

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Introduction

Implementation of a regional innovation strategy is a difficult task as it is based mainly on activities of a persuasive nature. The design of Lithuanian RIS3 consisted of several main steps; it took analyses, foresight, surveys, panel discussions and other tools to explore the present and future challenges, and the means and field of addressing them.

The activities were done in the framework of entrepreneurial discovery process. The process framed a bottom-up dialogue by representatives of science, business, public and the government authorities. It was a mean to mobilize various different stakeholders for a mutual goal. The process was based on constant communication and public accountability. Besides the goal for ready strategy, the process was aimed at the collective ownership of its output, thus the result.

The key to the development of smart specialisations are **actions of awareness** by entities that have a real impact on shaping innovation in development and creating new competitive advantages. Parallel to these activities, it is necessary to ensure **mutual communication** among the most important participants operating in the area of smart specialisation, especially those who benefits and contributes to science and business cooperation and helps regions to achieve their smart specialisation goals.

The important role in conducting communication and promotion activities is played by **entities implementing regional innovation strategies**.

The current document presents an overview of actions, communication and documentation of Organizational Coaching Tool used at Kaunas Science and Technology Park (Kaunas STP) aimed at creating knowledge and awareness of RIS3 and **to communicate Lithuanian smart specialization related information firstly with internal and then external environments** within EmpInno project.

General Approach

Firstly, **Organisational coaching tool (OCT)** is a specific product and way helping to internally enhance a capacity to utilize the strategies, and secondly, the development and implementation of new and adapted formats for the good innovation and SME Empowerment policies.

As one of the key components of the OCT in Kaunas STP, the Competency Mapping is used. A Competency mapping is a platform for comparing the present and desired level of skills and competencies of an individual, required to perform a task effectively and efficiently. This helps in identifying individual training needs and also performance appraisals. Competency Mapping is a cyclic process of identifying key competencies for an organization and/or a job and incorporating those competencies throughout the various processes (i.e. job evaluation, training, recruitment) of the organization.

The Process of Competency Mapping

Kaunas STP performs a role of strategy implementer. A main part of ensuring a high level of awareness of RIS3 at organizational level includes a structured approach to information and knowledge sharing.

By implementing the OCT Kaunas STP is targeting its' own staff members. The relevant staff members benefit from an enhanced organisational capacity which results from the intensified knowledge that is shared with other staff/team members in discussion rounds or memos. The Competency Map ensures that relevant staff members are equipped with more knowledge about the RIS3 and its implementation possibilities. The team members (target group) uses this to better consult the end-users (companies and

innovation actors) and catalyse their potential for innovation. All the activities lead to a better understanding of RIS3 processes and implementation opportunities.

At the very beginning of EmpInno project Kaunas STP has assigned its staff members as RIS3 specialists to work within different priority areas of smart specialization, which include:

- Energy
- ICT
- Food
- Materials
- Health&Life Science&Biotech

Further steps in competency mapping with an end result of knowledge and skills evaluation and identification of the lack of competences at a project level (knowledge and awareness of RIS3) include the following:

1. Knowledge level identification from the topic (RIS3 related priority area) description. Every resource (RIS3 specialist) has their designated priority area allotted. Depending on the importance of the priority are, one or few RIS3 specialists were assigned. For instance, ICT field is a predominant in Kaunas region, therefore 2 RIS specialists were assigned to cover ICT related priority area while Materials priority are lacks critical mass among business segment and 1 person was assigned to the priority are and his skills were also evaluated regarding science and business cooperation knowledge.

2. Conduct a *skills and knowledge analysis* by asking assigned RIS3 specialists to complete a RIS3 priority area and other related information. The information can be obtained by providing a template for employees to complete, or you can conduct one-on-one interviews using the template as a guide. The primary goal is to gather from employees what they feel are their competences to perform their respective jobs. The fragment of competency mapping table (template) below shows a level of knowledge in respective smart specialization areas of appointed RIS3 specialists after a self-evaluation workshop at very beginning of the project.

Competency Mapping

Kaunas Science and Technology Park

Proficiency level:	1 = Aware of the subject		2 = Can do with help		3 = Can do without help		4 = Can do and coach others		5 = Subject matter expert		
OR	1 = Aware of the subject		2 = Basic		3 = Average		4 = Expert				Date: 06/06/2016
Role (or actual person)--->	RIS3 specialist ICT	RIS3 specialist Energy	RIS3 specialist Food	RIS3 specialist Materials	RIS3 specialist Health&Life Science& Biotech	RIS3 specialist ICT2			Required	Competency Gap	Remarks
Smart Specialization Related Skills											
Knowledge of Innovation Ecosystem	5	3	2	4	4	4					
ICT area	4	2	2	2	1	3					
Energy area	2	4	1	2	1	1					
Food area	1	1	3	1	1	2					
Materials area	1	1	1	3	1	2					
Health&Life Science&Biotech area	2	1	2	1	4	2					
Business-science cooperation aspects	4	4	1	4	2	4					
Usage of SMEs empowerment tools	4	3	1	2	3	4					

3. Using the results of the skills and knowledge analysis, you are ready to develop a competency (skills and knowledge) self-development plan.

   It is worth to be noted that assigned RIS3 specialists have had a very general knowledge about the strategy itself. Even being competent in specific technological area did not mean that they were acquainted with RIS3 principles. The reason for that was that it was the very beginning of RIS3 implementation in Lithuania when EmpInno project started. In regards with that, RIS3 specialists have identified sources and steps how they can increase their competencies in respective RIS3 areas. The following forms of self-development were used:

- Desk research on RIS3 design, priorities, background information, etc.;
- Discussions with peer at different events where RIS3 specialists had an opportunity to learn about RIS3 perception from target groups. Different groups – innovative and technology-oriented business and scientists – different opinions;
- A great experience and knowledge source for RIS3 specialists is direct interaction and support to companies in consulting on development of project applications for funding of programmes that are intended to support RIS3 related areas only. This hand-on experience enables specialists to learn about the process from internal perspectives;
- Internal exchange of experience during internal meetings when RIS3 specialists were sharing acquired knowledge not only among themselves, but the whole team at Kaunas STP and sometimes at different other events organized by Kaunas STP, such as Breakfast of Innovators, RIS3 awareness raising events, etc.;
- There were numerous participations in different priority areas related workshops including attendance to priority areas committee meetings at stakeholders' level. Knowledge acquired during these participations outside Kaunas STP was afterwards shared internally and resulted in competence growth within the institution.

4. You can now assess the growth of required skills and knowledge on regular basis and see where gaps in competencies regarding priority areas still exists or has not reached a sufficient level. Competency gap represents the difference between the present competency possessed and a required level. Internally, it was agreed that at least Expert level (4=Can do and coach others) is required to be reached by RIS3 specialists in the course of improvement.

   You can use the results of recurrent evaluations to identify in what competencies RIS3 specialists need additional *development*. This helped the team to focus on the goals of Kaunas STP as strategy implementer and help RIS3 specialists develop toward the ultimate success of the organization. You can fill the suggestions for training as *remarks* for each competence.

5. **Measure the effectiveness.** The measurement was done on recurring instances every 6-9 months during the whole progress of the EmpInno project. It allows to evaluate a retention level of skills and knowledge within a team. Competency mapping is a cyclic process. If, after evaluation, the skills and knowledge has improved, then the actual skill level is enhanced and so the desired one too. The second fragment of competency mapping table below shows a level of knowledge in respective smart specialization areas of appointed RIS3 specialists at the latest evaluation phase more than 2 years in the project. The result shows that not only individual skills and knowledge have improved in respective smart specialization areas, but overall competencies of the whole team, as well.

Competency Mapping

Kaunas Science and Technology Park

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OR	1 = Aware of the subject	2 = Basic	3 = Average	4 = Expert			Date: 26/10/2018	
Role (or actual person)--->	RIS3 specialist ICT	RIS3 specialist Energy	RIS3 specialist Food	RIS3 specialist Materials	RIS3 specialist Health&Life Science& Biotech	RIS3 specialist ICT2	Required	Competency Gap	Remarks
Smart Specialization Related Skills									
Knowledge of Innovation Ecosystem	5	3	2	4	4	4			
ICT area	5	3	4	4	3	5			
Energy area	4	5	3	4	4	3			
Food area	3	3	5	3	3	3			
Materials area	3	3	2	5	4	3			
Health&Life Science&Biotech area	3	3	4	3	5	4			
Business-science cooperation aspects	5	4	4	5	4	5			
Usage of SMEs empowerment tools	5	4	4	5	5	4			

Insights

Internal communication of RIS3 related developments within and outside RIS3 specialists at Kaunas STP not only ensured the improvement of overall performance of the institution as implementer of smart specialization strategy and innovation intermediary in Lithuania, but as well it led to identification of number topic related issues which are not widely recognized and discussed. These issues are accumulated and can be summarized as follows:

- Lack of awareness among innovation ecosystem stakeholders about RIS3 in general;
- RIS3 document is too complicated for business to understand;
- Delays in terms of implementation processes of RIS3 measures;
- RIS3 document was developed with top-down approach which means that it reflects state attitude and does not reflect real needs of stakeholders;
- Uncertainty how to communicate RIS3 among stakeholders;
- Lack of motivation among scientists to work with business as there is superiority attitude towards business. And lack of experience in and lack of success cases of cooperation keep academia from opening to business;
- On the other hand, business struggles in getting best value proposition from academia. Sometimes innovate or find technological solution for existing problem is easier and cheaper abroad that in local innovation ecosystem;
- Internally, it is not feasible to have experts in all thematic RIS3 fields. Some internal staff members build their RIS3 knowledge from the scratch;
- There is no funding in some thematic fields (RIS3 priority areas), yet. It means that a demand for knowledge sharing is increasing slowly.