Workshop Results
KISS ME Kick Off Event
29 June 2017

At the Kick Off Event of the KISS ME Project on 29 June 2017, six workshops sessions on ideas for the improvement of innovation strategies were held. Within one hour, the participants were able to engage in three different workshops. In the following, the results generated in the sessions are summarized. They present an important input for the project and its upcoming activities.

We would like to thank all the participants for the active discussions and the valuable inputs given within the workshops. For more information about the project, its progress, and upcoming events, check www.interregeurope.eu/kissme or follow us on Social Media (Twitter: @KISSME_interreg; Facebook: @projectkissme).

Workshop 1: How can the industry / businesses / SMEs be involved in cross-border innovation processes?

Objective of the workshop
Capturing the experiences of the participants on SME policy for the KISS ME project in a structured way, so they can be compared among other experiences. The main objective is to make clear which instruments are suitable for which organisation types – and what is the added-value to implement these instruments on a cross-border level?

Suggestions of the project partners and stakeholders:

The experiences of the project partners and stakeholders in involving companies were:
- To reach start-ups and young entrepreneurs, it is important to provide an **international approach in university already**. Point out that cross-border cooperation brings new experiences and sometimes is fun as well.
- To reach SMEs, you should notice that there should be a **quick benefit** for the company. SMEs need hands-on actions and should easily see what's in it for them
- It works best if you provide a **mixture of tools**, platforms, courses, etc. Some companies are willing to access funding / EU-programmes and need help from public organisations in lowering thresholds and barriers to do so. A financial incentive to help them with the first steps (e.g. vouchers) could help as well.

- To reach even more companies, it makes sense to **tell the story, raise awareness:** use ambassadors (other SMEs), and use good stories. Moreover, it is important to make sure that the first step in cross-border cooperation is successful.
- Competition issues should not be hindering private sector involvement. **Trust** has to be created and the collective needs of companies and SMEs build a framework for participating in projects, showing best-practices and creating an environment of positive competition.

The added value of implementing instruments on a cross border-level is:
- Companies get access to a much bigger market
- There is complementary knowledge on the other side of the border
- There could be geographical / sectoral advantages much closer than one would expect
- Cross-border cooperation brings more fun / new experiences for younger companies
- First experience should be positive
- Showing best-practices, positive competition

The mixture of the many ways and definitions of involvement is one of the most important factors. D*irect involvement* (SMEs are beneficiaries of the funds and act as project partners directly responsible for the delivery of project activities) and *indirect involvement*: SMEs are a target group of the project activities, becoming users of the products, trainings, tools, solutions, etc. developed within the project) should be combined.

Workshop 2: How can the future of SME policy in the context of INTERREG be shaped?

Objective of the Workshop:
Elaborating a common view among the KISS ME project partners and stakeholders on how SME policy should be addressed by the structural funds in the future. In other words: if the KISS ME project results contributed to the discussions on post-2020 structural funds, what should they lobby for?

Suggestions of the project partners and stakeholders:

Wish: Keep the program simple and make it more attractive.

Measures:
1. Trust the program partners
2. Vouchers for good work
3. Find a unique selling point
4. Easy application/implementation

5. Talk to SMEs
6. Best practice from SME to SME
7. Translation from paper to face to face

Wish: Listen to SMEs and point out what is really important for them.

Measures:
1. Cross-Border-Cross-Clustering
2. Stakeholder meetings
3. Use of modern communication
4. Let the SMEs lobby on a national and European Level

Wish: Cluster forming and focus on structure. We need to solve the problems in society.

Measures:
1. Early dialog with the stakeholders

Wish: Focus what the SMEs really need and funding on specific topics.

Measures:
1. Influence to European organizations
2. First step forward internationalization
3. Investing in neighborhood relations

Wish: More flexible – Use a Tool-Box

Measures:
1. Secure flexible use of instruments already in programming

Wish: Content instead of administration.

Wish: Think in challenges not in problems.

Workshop 3: What are effective national policy instruments to foster innovation? Can these instruments also work cross-border?

During the workshop the participants identified the most common national policy instruments to foster innovation as:

- direct subsidy,
- tax advantages
- financial instruments (e.g. favourable loan offers)
- consultancy/networking support

- special sector support
- education

Whereas all participants report from their countries that all these measures are, to a certain extent, part of their national innovation policies, they agreed that not all of them are also suitable for a cross-border setting.

The instrument which is considered most suitable for this purpose is direct subsidy for cross-border projects. This is seen as especially important, since the participants see a clear connection between innovation and internationalisation. In the global economy these two aspects are closely connected. The degree of internationalisation and the role of cross-border activities were considered very different in the individual regions – ranging from a high degree of international and cross-border orientation in some regions, to only first isolated initiatives in other regions.

Concerning the accessibility of the various policy instruments, the participants reported very different approaches from their respective countries. While in some areas there are central contact points for all available instruments with integrated advisory and consultancy services, the instruments are only accessible via diverse sources in other areas and thus, difficult to identify and compare for interested parties. Especially for cross-border initiatives some participants also report a number of access barriers, like high administrative burden, lack of language skills and insufficient technological capacities.

In this context the participants agreed that there is also room for improvement concerning the available policy instruments in order to make them more attractive to foster (cross-border) innovation:

- the instruments should be more flexible and less restrictive
- the administrative burden should be minimized
- the instruments should be less focussed on national needs and more internationally oriented
- Education and infrastructure (e.g. broadband internet) should be emphasised

WORKSHOP 4: "Quadruple Helix" - How important are governments / research and knowledge institutions for innovation? What is their role in innovation processes?
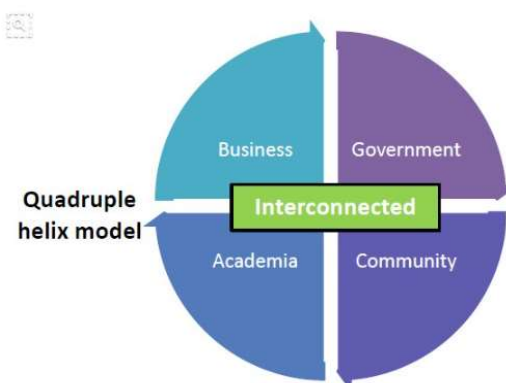
Introduction

The Triple Helix acknowledges explicitly the importance of higher education for innovation. It places the emphasis on knowledge production and innovation in the economy, so it is compatible with the *knowledge economy*. The Quadruple Helix already encourages the perspective of the *knowledge society*, and of *knowledge democracy* for knowledge production and innovation. The community is used to steer knowledge to be implemented in innovations.

Open Innovation is a new paradigm based on a **Quadruple Helix Model** where governments, the industry, academia and civil participants work together to co-create the future and drive structural changes far beyond the scope of what any one organization or person could do alone. This model encompasses also user-oriented innovation models to take full advantage of the cross-fertilization of ideas leading to experimentation and prototyping in real world settings.

There are 5 key elements in the new Open Innovation process:
- Networking;
- Collaboration: involving partners, competitors, universities, and users;
- Corporate Entrepreneurship: enhancing corporate venturing, start-ups and spin-offs;
- Proactive Intellectual Property Management: creating new markets for technology;
- Research and Development (R&D): achieving competitive advantages in the market.

Workshop "Quadruple Helix"

In this workshop it has been explored which instruments could be used to stimulate innovation. Who uses these instruments: all of the four actors in the quadruple helix or only some of them? Is the instrument effective? Might the instrument become more effective if certain administrative, organizational or other constraints were abolished? Is there an optimal regional scale for the functioning of the quadruple helix? Could the same instruments be used in cross-border contexts? Are there cultural problems in the workings of the quadruple helix?

Workshop results

General remarks

There is no recipe for open innovation within the quadruple helix.

The cooperation between the four parties of the quadruple helix is improved by the availability of moderators. Since the parties speak different languages, the moderators translate between the different parties. They are good communicators and ideally have experiences within all parties.

The optimal regional scale of a quadruple helix is rather small (one-hour drive). This may be a cross-border region.

There is a big need for sharing information on the use and the success of instruments that stimulate the cooperation within the quadruple helix, both in a regional, and in a cross-border setting. More successful examples should be documented and shared. Better: not only document successful projects, but evaluate all projects and learn from both successes *and* mistakes.

If projects face societal challenges, quadruple helix cooperation will arise organically and all parties within the cooperation will fulfill their natural role within the innovation process.

Government

Tax facilities should stimulate open innovation (more than closed forms of innovation).

Governments should facilitate the collaborating within the quadruple helix; organize the cooperation. The governments should bring different types of organizations together.

There is a need for opportunities to experiment. Projects that may fail still bear a bigger chance to contribute to innovation.

Innovative public procurement is a great stimulus for new solutions to "old" problems.

Organize multiyear, multi-means, multi-party innovation programs on one theme or subject. Example "Energy made in Arnhem".

The party in need of solutions to a certain problem invites a (large) number of other, diverse parties interested in solving the problem. The best solution(s) get funding. The other side of the same medal: governments as launching customer.

Create co-creation spaces (including money & time).

Reduce bureaucracy.

Firms

"Pressure cookers" can stimulate new ideas about solution of innovation problems. Experiments have shown that new solutions for actuals problems in firms may be found in 1-day pressure cooker brainstorming events in multidisciplinary (international) student teams.

Use all workers involved in the innovation process.

Create co-creation spaces (including money & time).

The party in need of solutions to a certain problem invites a (large) number of other, diverse parties interested in solving the problem. The best solution(s) get funding.

For international students SME-visiting programs might be used to find new (innovative) workers.

University

Foster public engagement of universities.

University programs should stimulate students to explore their innovative skills through practical cases within professional environments, both in firms, especially in SMEs, and in public sectors. Goals should be to contribute to find solutions for existing problems within the organization. Students learn a lot in practice, but also bring in new impulses, which is of greater importance for the functioning of the quadruple helix

International students are an interesting group to include in innovation projects. Not only their knowledge can be used, but also other networks are opened. For international students SME-visiting programs might be used to bind the students to the region. Foreign students should invite prominent SMEs from their home region to the visiting region.

Use (pro)active professionals to teach students.

Create co-creation spaces (including money & time).

Community

The community still has a relatively small role in innovation processes. Innovators that listen more closely to their potential customers ultimately make products that fulfill market demands.

Create co-creation spaces (including money & time).

The party in need of solutions to a certain problem invites a (large) number of other, diverse parties interested in solving the problem. The best solution(s) get funding.

Workshop 5: How do cultural differences influence cross-border cooperation?

Introduction

More than one third of the EU citizens live and work in Europe's border regions. Those borders have a direct and indirect impact on their lives.
European Territorial Cooperation (the Interreg programmes) plays an important role in removing border obstacles and fostering cross-border cooperation. Relatively small in budget, the Interreg projects have achieved many concrete outcomes for the citizens – whether in the area of cross-border security, transport, education, energy, health care, training or job creation.
However, a significant economic potential remains untapped in the border areas due to a lack of trust or even the existence of negative attitudes among neighbouring countries.
Also for SMEs, cross-border cooperation is not self-evident. Differences in language, law, regulation, culture, etc. are a barrier for SMEs which not everyone is willing to take on. The entrepreneurs who take the step, however, gain the experience that cooperation with a partner from neighboring countries is enriching for themselves and the company, often especially due to the differences.

Objective of the workshop

The main objective is to make clear how cultural differences influence cross-border cooperation, focussing on cross border cooperation between SMEs. Therefore, among others, the participants discussed the following questions: what is culture exactly? Where are differences relevant? And how can they be used positively?

Results and outcomes of the workshop

Meaning of culture

First of all, it was important to agree on a general definition of the concept of "culture". For the participants the following aspects are core elements of culture:

- Standards and values, traditions
- Gender diversity
- Religion
- History
- Language
- Educational background
- Political structures and systems

In addition, the concept of **business culture** was discussed in detail. The following aspects were considered as the most crucial components of business culture by the participants:

- Organisational structures
- Open vs. closed cultures – personal vs. formal relations
- Hierarchy
- Degree of flexibility (creativeness, innovativeness)
- Way of thinking and solving problems (out of the box)
- Uncertainty avoidance
- Etiquette

How do these aspects influence the cross-border cooperation?

Finally, the participants indicated how the abovementioned aspects of culture affect cross-border cooperation. The participants were urgently asked not to focus on the negative effects (**barriers**) only, but to specifically consider how cultural differences could also be used positively (**creative resource**) in cross-border cooperation as well.

- Creative resource
    - Synergy
    - Get to know each other
    - Reflection
    - Split up tasks and roles in the project
- Barrier
    - Language
    - Prejudices
    - (Dealing with) differences in law and regulation
    - Cultural differences are no priority in INTERREG
    - Level of experience with INTERREG / CBC Programmes
    - (Dealing with) costs (time + money)

Generally, the participants deal with cultural differences in a very pragmatic way. In more experienced border regions the existing cultural differences are used to give additional value to the project. For example, the project partners take into account these differences and divide the tasks (marketing / PR versus finance and administration) within the project so that they fit the different abilities and talents of the respective partners. In regions where cultural differences are stark and cross-border

cooperation is still in the initial phase, the actors choose a business approach rather focusing on the subject matter.

In addition, the participants appreciate that through intensive interaction with the project partners from the neighboring country they not only gain more understanding of the different cultures, but also become more aware of how they are perceived themselves. This (often unexpected) opportunity of reflection is experienced as very valuable.

Language, however, is and remains an important factor. In border regions with major language differences, the use of English and the use of interpreters often offers suitable solutions.

In spite of the creative resource perspective, all cultural differences cam still hamper cross-border cooperation. The participants therefore expressed an explicit appeal to the EU to include a mandatory intercultural communication course for all projects. These courses could for example be offered by the relevant regional program or by any project itself.

Workshop 6: Which tools are you lacking in your own organisation in order to make cross-border cooperation more successful?

Objective of the workshop

This workshop intended to provide a platform for the exchange of experience and for brainstorming new ideas. Coming from different backgrounds and being involved in cross-border cooperation in different ways, firstly, the participants were invited to evaluate the tools of their own organisation. Engaging in a joint evaluation process, the participants could get new perspectives on the approaches they are already familiar with. As a second step, by sharing ideas with each other the participants were able to broaden their horizon of tools and get new impulses for possible new approaches: what did not work for one organisation, might still be a suitable tool for the other; what proved to be very successful in one context, might have only limited effect in another one.

Suggestions of the workshop participants:

The workshop participants identified the following tools and measures as desirable but yet lacking approaches:

- **Automatic tool for diploma recognition:** diploma recognition takes time because diplomas have to be checked and transferred into national frameworks. The recognition process could be speeded up if transfers of certain degrees would be automatized and applied generally. A list of generally recognized diplomas from certain schools and their respective transfer into national frameworks could be determined, so individual checks of these diplomas would no longer be necessary.

- **"teach the teacher":** regularly brief and teach advisors, such as business promotion or Chambers of Commerce, about the state of play on the other side of the border: if advisors are informed well about the opportunities on both sides of the border, they can give more sustainable and convincing advice about companies' and employees' possibilities to work cross-border.

- **"set of arguments":** Facilitate getting information on "why" entrepreneurs should work cross-border and "how to" work cross-border; advisors, such as business promotion and Chambers of Commerce, should have access to a tool in which information on the advantages of cross-border work for entrepreneurs and "instructions" on necessary steps to establish cross-border cooperations are bundled.

- **Tool to facilitate networking / to facilitate establishing contacts on the other side of the border:** there should be a data base or a search engine through which interested entrepreneurs could find possible suitable partners for their cross-border cooperation by using certain key words, filters, etc.

- **"share of experience platform":** face to face + Internet; entrepreneurs who work cross-border should regularly come together in an informal framework to share their experience in cross-border cooperation – both with other entrepreneurs who are already involved in cross-border cooperation, and with entrepreneurs who are not yet involved in cross-border cooperation, but interested in the idea; moreover, success stories should be disseminated via the Internet and other media.

- **"cross-border ambassadors":** entrepreneurs who work or have worked cross-border successfully should take the role of "cross-border ambassadors" and function as contact points for other entrepreneurs who have questions concerning cross-border work.