

PROGRAMME: Support Scheme of Counselling and Training of SMEs

Originator: Peter Weiss, Municipality of the Capital of the Slovak Republic

Weblinks: www.nadsme.sk

E mail: weiss@bratislava.sk Tel: 00421 2 502 44 517

1. SUMMARY OF GOOD PRACTICE

▪ Overview & Aims

Launched in 2000, the overall aim of the **Support Scheme of Counselling and Training** is to raise the competitiveness of SMEs and improve the survival rate of start-ups, particularly those SMEs trading for less than 3 years, helping to sustain employment and create new jobs in the region.

SME's are provided with subsidised support to access individual information and counselling i.e. advice from professional advisors and financial grants enabling them to access training services from professional training agencies.

▪ Key Resources

– Programme Partners.

National Agency for Development of Small and Medium Enterprises (NADSME)

– Funding: Funding Body & SME Contribution

– The Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic (ME SR)

Total budget to date €2.4M. Co-financed with EU funds from 2000-2003 onwards, supported by state funds from 2004 with SMEs required to contribute 25% of the project investment from 2010-12. Companies can access up to 60 counselling hours of support up to the value €1,620 each year and up to €30,000 awarded grant for training per call.

▪ Eligibility Criteria. Micro, small and medium sized enterprises resident/registered and located in Slovakia

▪ Terms and Conditions. Subsidies awarded as grants, both financial and non-financial with no repayment required.

2. IMPLEMENTATION

A national scheme set up in 2000 and running until December 2013 the programme is delivered by 3 part time managers, 20 part time officers in regional business support organisations and 40 advisors working with SMEs.

▪ Key Steps - How it Works

Participants are able to access up to 60 hours of tailored, one to one advisory/coaching support from professional advisors to help them achieve the business objectives identified at the outset.

Businesses involved in the scheme are also encouraged to access other financial and non-financial support ranging from provision of micro loans and help to source venture capital investment through to access to business incubators, training, information and advice on internationalisation, innovation and available via the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) through to networking events.

▪ **Key Stats, 2012 results as follows**

KEY MEASURE	ESTIMATED TOTAL
Applications submitted (before call for SME contribution announced)	365
Applications accepted	363
Funding granted (2000 – 2012)	€1.159M
SME Investment	(info unavailable)
2000/2006 (First half of the programme)	
(New) Jobs created	8350
Jobs sustained	19,450

Simple application process. Decisions for information and counselling services are made immediately, with response to applications for training services normally advised within 2-4 weeks. No application costs involved for SMEs. Partner administrative costs not assessed.

3. KEY LEARNING POINTS & OPPORTUNITIES

Legacy benefits from the scheme include helping to create and sustain employment, ensuring long term sustainability of SMEs and impact on the local/regional economy

– **What worked well, key strengths**

Regional/local accessibility and impact. External, on going monitoring of client satisfaction. Efficient procedures resulting in reduced administration for SMEs

Development of good network of experienced advisors, consultants/trainers and business support organisations with a good knowledge of local markets and the business environment. Personal one to one approach

– **Challenges/Weaknesses**

Short time frame for implementation within each yearly budget. Reduction in the network of collaborative business support agencies for a variety of different strategic and financial reasons. 'Offline' database & management information system. Missing efficiency/impact data. Year on year reduction of programme budget

▪ **Transferability**

– Opportunities

National government commitment to implement the Small Business Act, supporting SMEs.

To secure forthcoming EU resources for a new/on-going programme.

Identify new partners and expand team of business advisors/diversify and extend portfolio.

Implement quality standards and evaluation. On-line data collection, reporting and feedback.

– Threats

Strategic changes. Programme not integrated into SME support & business development strategies. Limited or no financial allocation from government and/or supported by EU creating administrative/bureaucratic difficulties making the programme less competitive/effective.

Loss of established expertise i.e. current network of regional business support organisations, advisers and counsellors.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

DIFASS You Tube Channel http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DITo_QC24Hg

Schematic Counselling & Training for SMEs <http://www.nadsme.sk/sk/content/poradenstvo-a-vzdelavanie>

Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) <http://een.ec.europa.eu/>