

PROGRAMME: InCompass Project
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1. SUMMARY OF GOOD PRACTICE

▪ Overview & Aims

A two year project launched in 2012, the **InCompass Project** is aimed at helping the 12 regional partners involved to **identify sustainable support mechanisms** for the **Creatives sector** and **move away from previous dependence on public funding**.

Partners are undertaking an extensive programme of research and analysis across the EU to identify alternative methods of support i.e. **innovative commercial practices** and to develop and share the methods used. This includes the development of sustainable approaches to the financing of incubation units for Creatives sector start-ups.

A business support instrument rather than a financial instrument the key objectives of the programme are:

- To **identify existing, innovative good practice** that contributes towards the achievement of **financial sustainability** of incubation units for business start-ups in the creative industries.
- To **assess and test** the transferable nature of these good practices between regions **for local implementation and adoption into policy**, thereby making a significant contribution to evidence-based regional policy making and improvement.
- By working together, to **develop practical and realistic implementations plans** for the transfer and application of good practice and improvement in regional policy across all regions.

▪ Key Resources

- Programme Partners

- **Funding:** €2,134K funded by EU regional finance. **SME Contribution** N/A – research project.

▪ Eligibility Criteria

The research project is ultimately aimed at providing improved/sustainable incubator space for business start-ups and mature firms in the Creative Industries sectors.

- **Terms and Conditions:** N/A – the project is not a financial instrument.

2. IMPLEMENTATION

The **research project** involves three key delivery phases:

- (i) A programme of **12 Study Visits and Reports on Good Practice**
- (ii) **12 Thematic Seminars** to share/disseminate the findings within the consortium/project partnership
- (iii) **Regional Implementation Groups (RIGs)** made up of key stakeholders in each of the 12 regions who assess the transferability of good practice and make regional policy recommendations for policy improvements.

Covering a wide area of research, partners also agreed a methodology of breaking down the work into 3 purpose-led workgroups to analyse the main aspects/themes involved.

WORKGROUP 1: COMMERCIAL CONTEXTUALISATION

Scope of theme

Looking at how commercial activities e.g. rents and fees from incubates, renting out spaces and services, providing consulting services and acquiring project-based funding contribute to financial sustainability. Revenue, savings and clustering benefits from shared commercial services such as 3D prototyping or recording studios.

Good practice identified to date

- **Co Work**, revenues from renting out various types of work spaces.
- **Patras Science Park**, looking for funding on the basis of national and EU (FP, H2020, Interreg) projects
- **Creative Factory**, renting the incubator's premises to third parties for conferences, seminars or social events
- **HUB Milano**, applying incubates' expertise to provide consulting services to third parties

WORKGROUP 2: SOCIAL CONTEXTUALISATION

Scope of theme

How social interaction can contribute to financial sustainability e.g. through internal and external networking, ties to local communities and businesses. The role of social activity and services in supporting successful and financially resilient specialist clusters.

Good practice identified to date

- **Patras Carnival Lab**, generation of income on the basis of strong support in the local community (certified sponsorship, issue of a Carnival Card)
- **Fabbrica del Vapore**, organising events to increase networking (e.g. fashion shows)
- **HUB Milano**, using the building to stimulate networking and 'buzz': transparency, third places, food and hospitality
- **Corallia**, connecting to the regional economy by focusing on cooperation within clusters rather than on individual firms

WORKGROUP 3: TIERS OF SUPPORT

Scope of Theme

Looking at how the support programme and cooperation with partners could contribute to financial sustainability e.g. through training and coaching, partnership agreements etc. An examination of the various levels of support available, their cost effectiveness and revenue from knowledge transfer, mentoring and community engagement etc.

Good practice identified to date

- **MINC**, providing assistance and information on the possibilities and pitfalls of venture capitalism and connecting to relevant international clusters through partnerships, study visits and education of coaches (Silicon Valley, Stanford University)
 - **Creative Factory**, involving partners from business and education (e.g. Rabobank, Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences)
 - **Company Care**, 'web shop' offering members services and products from the incubator's partners
- **Key Stats/Outcomes** N/A (Research Project)

3. KEY LEARNING POINTS & OPPORTUNITIES

Whilst the programme is aimed at identifying good practice **business support instruments** it will ultimately provide help for early stage businesses. The 5 study visits to date have enabled the partners to identify the more common good practices relating to ownership, funding, focus and embeddedness of incubators. It has also **identified practices that really stand out and which are particularly inspiring or unique**. The research has also identified some initial/**important preliminary insights regarding policy-making**.

- **What worked well**
Encouraging incubators to become less dependent on public finance and look for other sources. Bring all partners together, (planning).
- **Challenges/Weaknesses**
No standardised package (yet) to transfer. No effects yet, not consolidated/ready for transfer.
- **Transferability**
The project comes under different EU framework/regulations so will be difficult to implement
- Opportunities: Creative incubators opportunity for cities (city centre alive)
- Threats: None reported. (Business support rather than financial instrument)

FURTHER INFORMATION:

DIFASS You Tube Channel: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sg72TSAQTBA>