



E-Zine N° 2 October 2003

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Background of the I³ project

The I³ project – “The Innovation and Incubation Initiative” is a pilot project co-financed under the Leonardo da Vinci programme.

The I³ project aims to address the needs of Business Innovation Centres (BICs) and Business Incubators (BIs) in relation to competitiveness and quality management by providing information and web based training to business incubator personnel. The project will provide the staff and management of BICs and BIs with information and training focusing specifically on the different types of support needed by **High growth SMEs** or **High Potential Start-Ups (HPSUs)** located in these centres.

The project was set up in order to boost the performance of business incubators by increasing the level of information and training available to their personnel. As the project developed however it was decided to expand the target audience to include business advisors and this is highlighted elsewhere in the E-Zine.

To reach this objective the project is going through the following stages:

- ✿ Undertaking a thorough analysis of the training needs of target groups including incubated companies;
- ✿ Developing a multimedia training tool based on the results of the research conducted on training needs, comprising an online training tool, a directory of best practices, case studies, and a platform for the exchange of information;
- ✿ Carrying out an in-depth evaluation on the processes adopted throughout the project.

The project involves 8 partners from 5 different countries;

National partners:

- IRELAND : WESTBIC
- SPAIN: Instituto de Empresa
- GREECE: Atlantis Consulting
- LITHUANIA: Kaunas University of Technology – Regional Business Incubator
- NORTHERN IRELAND (UK): Initiative Economic Development
- NORTHERN IRELAND (UK): Omagh Enterprise Company Ltd

European partners:

- European Business and Innovation Centre Network (EBN)
- European Business Angel Network (EBAN)

EBAN and EBN are European organisations with their head offices located in Brussels.

The project extends over a period of 24 months.

Editorial

The second I³partner meeting was organised by the Kaunas University of Technology Regional Business Incubator (KTC) in Kaunas, Lithuania, in the first days of July. The aim of this meeting was to discuss the progress made by each partner on the Training Needs Analysis (TNA), analysis that will ultimately lead to the creation of an **online training tool for BIC managers & Business Advisers**. The partners came to the conclusion that the project is progressing satisfactorily and in accordance with the expectations. This means that the project is now entering its second phase, which is the development of the training tool itself, taking into account the results of the TNA.

The most important conclusion stemming from the desk research conducted during the TNA is that while there are a lot of incubation training programmes available at present (mainly directed at incubatee companies), there is no training material or programme that is specifically aimed at enhancing the capacities and quality of the work of business and innovation centre managers and staff. This assessment reinforces the view that the I³ project and the subsequent creation of the online training tool will be extremely useful and beneficial for all users.

The project partners are aware that other projects are looking to similar issues and in this newsletter we will talk about them in order to gain from the experience and knowledge developed by our peers.

Readers should be aware that I³ partners welcome feedback from non-members.

Synopsis of the I³ meeting held in Kaunas

During the first partner meeting in Galway (Ireland) the training needs analysis had been divided among the partners in the following way:

- Interviews with 5 BIC / Incubator Manager in each country;
- Focus groups with staff from 2 BICs in each country;
- Interview with representatives of BIC/Incubator Networks;
- Interviews with government agencies in each country;
- Consultation of 80 BIC/Incubator client companies;
- Desk Research.

This responsibility was divided according to the competence of each partner.

A number of questionnaires were used in the research process and all the questionnaires were divided into four sections: background, availability of development services, links with external organisations, and evaluation of the necessary skills to be acquired.

It was also discussed as to whether the TNA would reveal a preference comprising of information resources and/or training material, and to what extent. This information would be crucial for next phase of material development, to be undertaken by the Instituto de Empresa in Spain.

The discussions held during the meeting also led to the realisation that the target audience for the online training tool is much wider than just the BIC/Incubator managers and staff. The partners hence decided to include all targets under the umbrella term "*business adviser*" in order to offer a training tool to the widest audience possible. This means that all possible beneficiaries targeted are: BIC managers, BIs and High Potential Start Up support institutions as well as the clients of these entities (HPSUs, SMEs...) which are potentially concerned by the content of the material.

I³: Where are we now?

The Kaunas University of Technology has just completed the draft report of the Training Needs Analysis. All data has been analysed separately by target group and then gathered into a general table where a weighting was applied.

Several conclusions stem from this report such as:

- The availability of skills and knowledge in areas of interest to incubatee companies varies greatly between the different countries interviewed. For instance, 60% of BIC/BI respondents in Ireland expressed a desire to develop skills and competencies in relation to intellectual property management, assistance in accessing loans and technology commercialisation, while 67 % of the Greek entities feel that they need help with business basics, development in provision of marketing services, etc.... Hence the needs vary according to the stage of development of the innovation process in every country. The same goes for the type of business services provided to the SMEs and the influence of the Centre in assisting resident SMEs in different countries.
- One of the main concerns of incubatee companies as seen by the managers and staff of BI and BICs is investor linkages (venture capitalists, seed capital funds...); According to SMEs, issues such as legal services and intellectual property management are of significant concern.
- Overall the main area of concern according to the data gathered is advice and assistance on new product development.
- The number of respondents (Centres) currently planning to provide additional services to their incubatee companies is very low (around 18%);
- 71.2% of respondents (incubator staff and managers) indicate that Internet/Web Sources are the most important media for them in acquiring skills and knowledge which they can use to support incubatee companies;
- The training tool utility is considered by 4 out of 5 respondents as being potentially of great assistance in providing incubation and innovation support to clients;
- Among the BIC/BI staff and management respondents, 55.2% would prefer an accredited formal training course while 44.8% would prefer an information resource. On the contrary, when interviewing the government agencies, 60% would prefer an information resource as opposed to an accredited training tool.
- ***100% of Agencies indicate the lack of skills/knowledge amongst BIs/BICs staff management as the biggest difficulty that Centres face in providing business development, incubation and innovation supports to their clients.***

From these results it appears that the TOP 5 topics to be developed as part of the multimedia training tool are:

- 1) Advice and assistance on New Product Development;
- 2) Technology Transfer and Commercialisation advice and assistance;
- 3) Intellectual Property management;
- 4) Advice and assistance in manufacturing/Production Issues;
- 5) Project Management advice and assistance.

A separate country specific information section will be created for funding issues due to the crucial importance of the latter for incubatee SMEs.

What are the next steps?

Based on the results of the TNA IdeE will commence the development of the training materials. It is envisaged that this process will be completed in January 2004 when the partners are scheduled to meet again.

Related projects

Business Incubator Management Training Institute

This pilot project will also be partially funded by the Leonardo da Vinci programme. The Business Incubator Management Training Institute is designed to provide the Incubator sector with academic training but especially practical, everyday management tools needed to successfully design and operate business incubators and enable them to realise their full growth potential, keeping always in mind that the ultimate goal is the creation of viable new SMEs within a sustainable incubator business model. In addition to conventional intensive training seminars, this training tool shall comprise instructive contents, methodologies, materials and tools especially adapted to distance- learning through new technologies. It shall combine self-learning on-line / off-line methods. Such a programme is not offered anywhere in Europe at the present.

Target users:

- Managers and staff of business incubators
- Universities, training organisations and vocational training centres
- Trainers and consultants specializing in incubator management
- Officials or other key persons of incubator founder/sponsor entities

Objectives:

- Training managers and staff of business incubators to perform their management, organizational, monitoring and quality-check and control tasks correctly and successfully;
- Preparing, through the continuing vocational training product, key-persons from Incubator sponsor organizations (public, private or academic) and policy makers involved in business incubator national and / or regional initiatives;
- Ensuring a continuous exchange of experiences, best practices and materials for use among all stakeholders.

The products

- A series of structured and intensive 24/32-hour training seminars delivered by qualified instructors & practitioners
- A training Web site with an extranet: comprising a distance training platform
- A "Trainer's Guide", providing guidelines on contents and methodologies
- Multimedia self-learning didactic materials (CD-ROMs)
- A manual guide for trainees (Training Kit)

This is a programme for managers and staff of business incubators, that could be adapted for Tech-park managers, Boards, public agencies, universities etc. It can also be a self-training and self-assessment course with the administrative support of the agency offering the course through the e-learning platform.

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PREDELSE

The Pre-Incubator - Development of Leadership, Structure and Entrepreneurship is an initiative of the Stockholm School of Entrepreneurship (SSES). The goal of SSES is to promote the Stockholm Region as one of the leading innovative and entrepreneurial hot spots in the world. PREDELSE is a learning program that is being set up as a pedagogic tool for incubator managers but also for Business Angel Network managers (BANs), development agencies, inventors, consultants...aimed at:

- Improving the manager's motivation and competence;
- Improving his/her efficiency as a manager and group member;
- Highlighting the importance of technical values as well as excellence of human values.

The main objective of the course is to develop the people's general knowledge of incubators, make them visible to students and researchers but also to produce a toolbox for the development of structural and social capital, encouraging the development of new projects, and understand the need for different leadership styles.

It is expected that participants will develop a deeper self-understanding, improved leadership knowledge, methods and tools and also to complement their work as incubator managers by absorbing new ideas and building contacts.

Special issues discussed during the course will be:

- Role and legitimacy of the incubator in the innovation system;
- Financing incubators;
- Role models;
- Processes for environmental analysis, marketing and business and strategy development.

The challenge of the SSES will be to prove the usefulness of such a course to people who are for the most part uninformed with regards the activity of incubators and to prove its potential impact on the everyday management of such innovative entities.

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SUN & SUP

The SUN & SUP project is part of the PAXIS action managed by DG Enterprise. The project aims at incubating a new player into the European Innovation scene; i.e. a network representing the European start-up community, with a voice at the European level.

To achieve this, two networks have been set up:

The SUN network will gather 12 members, comprised of companies at various stages of development while the SUP network will gather 14 service providers in the fields most relevant to start-up creation and development.

These two networks will work together in Task Forces, in order to improve key services at the European level. They will also provide the EC with recommendations on the establishment of a "voice of the European start-ups".

While in preparation of the Training Needs Analysis the I³ Managers established a list of incubator manager's needs, the SUN & SUP partners established a list of existing or missing needs as viewed by start-up companies. The list of needs are included hereafter. It will be interesting at later stage to compare and contrast the two lists as the SUN & SUP project develops.



With the support of the European Commission. This information is offered on the sole responsibility of the using party.

Global list of services to start-ups according to their stage of development

Stages of Dvlpt Needs	Pre-creation stage	Creation	Early stage development / Survival	Growth Phase	IPOs / Consolidation
Leadership / Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Detection and evaluation of business projects - Preparation and update of Business Plan - Identifying partners and partners' agreement - Creating spin-offs projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Time and priorities management - Coaching with existing entrepreneurs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time and priorities management - Coaching with existing entrepreneurs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strategic and operational guidance - Public relations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strategic and operational guidance - Public relations
Legal issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Legal audit of the project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Management of legal issues for new enterprises 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management of legal issues for new enterprises 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal support for market expansion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal support for going public
Organisation / Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Launching projects in incubators, Why, How, Where? - Pre-organisation stage / Good enterprise procedures from the beginning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Incubations - New facilities Management tools (Data centre, Bio-labs, Internet Access) - Office management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Incubations - Facilities design 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management of logistics for market expansion - Facility management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management of logistics for market expansion - Facility management
Marketing / Sales / Market Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Market research – How to perform this during the pre-creation stage? - Sales plan and management - Using Data Centre, Internet access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sales reporting - Sales force management - Marketing plan - Developing company sales media - The right E-business approach for my project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Marketing consultancy - Management of sales / CMR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support for international trade 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Global marketing and sales
Financing / Investments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How to write financial plans and identify adequate sources of funding - Pre-selecting banks before creation - Finance coaching for pre-creation stage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agreement with financial organisations for funding - Financing Business Plans - Business plan evaluation - Economic and commercial profitability plans - Business Angels Obtaining Seed funding - Dealing with Business Angels - Agreement with financial organisations for funding - Investment sourcing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Banking and Venture Capital training -Management of insurance portfolio 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Capital Development funding - Merger and Acquisition funding - Venture Capital - Investment Readiness - Preparation of NDA Agreement - Preparation of Due diligence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capital Development funding - Merger and Acquisition funding / advisory - Access to IPO - Legal consultation in consolidations - Private placement
Human Resources / People and skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Start up course in human resources management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Delegation of responsibilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management of people and skills / training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management of human resources - Motivating the team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adaptation of management style
Technology / Knowledge Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Linking educational investment to industrial spin-offs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing partnerships for knowledge and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing partnerships for knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management of R&D 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Management of R&D

	- Key Technologies training	technology transfer	and technology transfer		
IPR's	- Start up course in IPRs management / Protecting our ideas	Legal consultancy Consultancy in IPR protection	Management of IPRs	Management of IPRs in targeted countries	Global IPRs management

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ME-T (Multimedia E-Training Tool)

ME-T is a software package that has been developed as part of the successful GATE project and consist of a tool that enables authors, lacking programming skills, to develop multimedia training course in a user-friendly way. As a result, domain experts are now able to develop multimedia training courses without the help of a programmer. This reduces the cost of developing this type of course, speeds up the production process considerably and enables the adjustment of courseware to user requirements.

So far, authors and students of Regione Toscana (Italy, forest fire department), and NIBRA (National Dutch Institute for Firemen Training) have used ME-T with excellent results. At NIBRA, the first course executed with ME-T resulted in 90% of students passing the exam (whilst normal success factor with traditional learning methods is between 40% and 60%).

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Entrain-Net - Developing Entrepreneurial Training - support tool for incubators

Entrain.net is a network of 24 BICs that aims to exchange best practices and transfer expertise in entrepreneurship training. The three main objectives of Entrain. Net can be summarised as follows: 1) to collect and transfer best practices, 2) to test best practices in 15 regions and 3) to build up and diffuse a European guide on entrepreneurship.

EBN Business.Connect - Internationalisation Support tool for Incubators

EBN Business.Connect is a tailor made programme to assist innovative small businesses to successfully enter and grow in international markets. It combines tried and tested tools and methodologies with a person-to-person network of contents and support organisations spanning over 20 European countries.

The EBN Business.Connect programme consists of 2 integrated elements: 1) tools and methodologies for preparing and assisting SMEs in the internationalisation process; 2) a B2B portal for entering your organisation details and for finding matching organisations across Europe.

For more information on these two projects, please contact:

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Useful Links

Greece

<http://www.incubator-chania.gr/en.htm> (Business Incubator in Chania Crete)
<http://www.stepc.gr/> (Business Incubator in Central Macedonia)
<http://www.techpath.gr/en/> (Information on the Thessaloniki Technology Park)
<http://www.tmth.edu.gr/en/index.html> (Thessaloniki Technology Museum)
<http://www.psp.org.gr/eng/thermok.htm> (Incubator in Patras)

European Union

http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/smie/viewmeasure_el.cfm?m_id=1939 (European Commission Support Measures Database)

United States

<http://www.nbia.org> (National Business Incubator Association)

Note: Our first E-Zine contained many useful contacts in relation to national and regional incubators and technology parks, existing services to SMEs and business managers, Universities, research centres, development agencies, management schools ...

Publications

The NBIA (National Business Incubator Association) in the US has just published a national Benchmarking Study:

NBIA Research Series

Technology-based entrepreneurial firms are an integral part of the knowledge economy, and business incubation programs focused on technology-based companies play a crucial role in accelerating the growth of these firms. NBIA performed a national benchmarking analysis to gain a better understanding of technology business incubation best practices. Cases studies, data on incubator characteristics, descriptions of community factors and more provide valuable information for incubator developers, managers and stakeholders.

Author: Louis Tornatzky, Hugh Sherman and Dinah Adkins

Publisher: NBIA Publications

Note: The National Business Incubation Association is a private, non-profit 501(c)(3) membership organization based in Athens, Ohio. The organisation seeks to advance business incubation and entrepreneurship. It provides thousands of professionals with the information, education, advocacy and networking resources to bring excellence to the process of assisting early-stage companies worldwide.

The association is composed primarily of incubator developers and managers, but technology commercialization specialists, educators and business assistance professionals are also well represented. Its mission is to provide training and a clearinghouse for information on incubator management and development issues and on tools for assisting start-up and fledgling firms.

Events

Date	Event	Location
9,10,11 November 2003	UK Business Incubation 5 th Annual International Conference	London, United Kingdom
13,14 November 2003	Fourth Annual EBAN Congress	Milano, Italy

Do you want to be actively involved in this project?

If you are interested in the training and resource tools being developed in this project, we welcome your involvement in a number of ways:

- Provide feedback on the TNA results
- Provide information on your requirements (both incubator personnel and start-up companies)
- Test the prototypes of training and resource tools and provide feedback
- Participate in training, information and dissemination events

Please contact the I³ partner in your country or contact EBN or EBAN for other European countries:

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