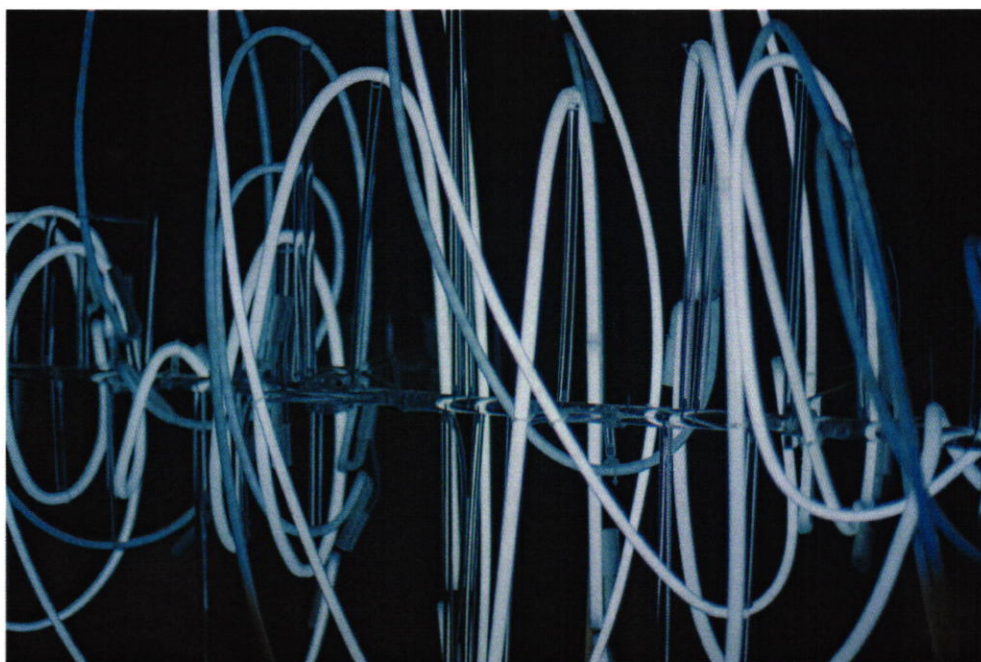


P-IRIS

Policies to improve rural areas' innovation systems by professionalising networking activities and use of innovation tools

ACTION PLAN FOR THE DEVELOPMENT CENTRE OF THE HEART OF SLOVENIA (SLOVENIA)



**P2. Development Centre of the Heart of Slovenia
(Slovenia)**

June 2019



**RAZVOJNI CENTER
SRCA SLOVENIJE**

DEVELOPMENT CENTRE
OF THE HEART OF SLOVENIA

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Part I - General information

Name of the project: P-IRIS: Policies to improve rural areas' innovation systems by professionalising networking activities and use of innovation tools

Partner organisation: Development Centre of the Heart of Slovenia

Other partner organisations involved (if relevant): /

Country: Slovenia

NUTS2 region: Western Slovenia

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Part II - Policy context

- The Action Plan aims to impact:
- Investment for Growth and Jobs programme
 - European Territorial Cooperation programme
 - Other regional development policy instrument

Name of the policy instrument addressed:

Sub-regional Programme of the Development Partnership of the Centre of Slovenia 2014-2020

Part III - Details of the actions envisaged

ACTION 1

1. The background

Development Centre of the Heart of Slovenia at its work considers the needs of the local environment all the time. To realize this, it organizes leads and coordinates networks, like the network of communities and municipalities, the network of tourist bidders, the network of craftsmen, and the network of entrepreneurs (SMEs). During the ongoing work with above mentioned networks greater connectivity of municipalities in the territory of Heart of Slovenia was mentioned as a challenge. It was written in Sub-regional Programme of the Development Partnership of the Centre of Slovenia 2014-2020 that municipalities have to (under priority 3) form and provide an attractive and credible environment with knowledge, competences and innovations for young people, SMEs, start-ups, craftsman etc.

Thanks to P-IRIS project, we have an opportunity to learn from other regions about their specific features of rural innovation systems, which are characterised by asymmetric relations and uneven resources between public, R&D and SMEs actors, and by shortage of scientific disciplines. In particular, we detected a Good practice named Luovasti (co-working and pop-up space for freelancers, entrepreneurs and remote workers). Based on the description of the good practice prepared by a Finnish partner, we have organized a study trip to Finland for two stakeholders - a representative of municipality Litija and representative of a local initiative for a co-working space. During this interregional study trip we have learnt what were key criteria for establishing a co-working space in a rural



area in Finland, what are differences between rural and urban co-working spaces, what are needed resources, what is a proper programme for a rural co-working space etc. The main understanding that we have taken from this good practice and transfer it to our action is the fact, that rural co-working places are also very attractive - compared to a well-known model of co-working places in a big cities. The first action shall be to find a local motivated leader, find an appropriate space for the co-working and to set up a legal entity.

2. Action

Our action is to establish a co-working organization in Litija and Šmartno pri Litiji. It will serve as a hub for young innovative entrepreneurs, where they could work, socialize, get knowledge and business support. It will be open mainly for the young and innovative entrepreneurs, who are developing new products and services. However, its basic principle this will be based on openness for all who would like to participate and join. Its mission will be to become a centre of innovativeness for SMEs in the local environment. Municipalities Litija and Šmartno pri Litiji have become commuter towns and the whole region is suffering due to heavy daily migration to larger cities close by. The established businesses and bigger companies from both municipalities are extremely fragmented and they don't have any strong entrepreneurs' social or business oriented networks; to get in touch with each other, exchange ideas, innovate together, socialize etc. Because of the lack of cooperation between local entrepreneurs and the lack of support services, we estimate the innovativeness and possibility for growth is lower than in the regions where they have co-working and SME hubs.

3. Players involved

Development Centre of the Heart of Slovenia

Our role is to be a catalyser for establishing a co-working hub. We were searching for good practices and delivered an in-depth study of a selected good practice. We found a local initiative that was ready to work hard towards establishing a new co-working hub. We offered the opportunity to one local leader and initiator of the idea for co-working hub, to develop competences on establishing and managing local networks, which are the key competences for the creation of new co-working hub. We are also coordinating all activities between involved players.



Municipality of Litija

Its main role is to financially support the new organization who will establish a co-working hub. It is very important to also give a co-working hub all non-financial support for successful start.

Municipality of Šmartno pri Litiji

Its main role is to financially support the new organization who will establish co-working hub. It is very important to also give a co-working HUB all non-financial support for successful start.

Local initiative who will establish a legal organization to run a co-working hub

Its main role is to get preliminary support statements from the Municipality of Litija and Municipality of Šmartno pri Litiji. After that, they shall establish a legal entity and work with both municipalities to get their financial and non-financial support to establish a co-working HUB. After that, their main activity will be to prepare and run an appealing programme for the companies and individuals who will join or are working in the Municipality of Litija and Municipality of Šmartno pri Litiji.

4. Timeframe

April - June 2019: consultancy for the establishment of the legal entity that will run the co-working hub.

June - December 2019: consultancy to the newly established organization to open co-working hub.

5. Costs and funding sources

- Development Centre of the Heart of Slovenia (help from EU funding and through LAG),
- Municipality of Litija - 6.000 EUR for 2019
- Municipality of Šmartno pri Litiji - 6.000 EUR for 2019



6. Results

The main result will be an established co-working space and innovation/technology hub in the Municipality of Litija and Municipality of Šmartno pri Litiji.

After it will be established, the leaders will work on programme of the co-working hub which has a vision to embrace following services and activities:

- Entrepreneurship dissemination activities;
- Integrated orientation services and training;
- Soft support services: technical experts, marketing managerial mentoring and training services;
- Supporting access to alternative funding sources;
- Specialized and tailored support services, mentoring, business consulting;
- Territorial promotion.

Not all of the above-mentioned services will be developed in a year or two. The list represents the guidelines which will be tuned with the particular needs of the companies who will join the co-working hub.



ACTION 2

1. The background

Action 2 is following Action 1. In the interregional learning process, we have learnt about the importance and necessity of having a co-working hub in small rural areas, if we want to have innovative, strong and engaging living and working environment outside the city centres and urban areas. It represents a core element of boosting innovative networks in the rural areas. Therefore, the Action 1 was set to initiate this process.

In the process of influencing the Policy instrument, we have learnt that it is of a great importance that the co-working hub performs its mission and vision, and brings considerable benefits to local community. Therefore its infrastructure and services have to be carefully selected and run in order to bring the desired outcomes. Since the rural co-working hub type of organization is very new one in Slovenia and similarly across Europe, there is no established pattern yet about setting and managing it. In terms of infrastructure it is much clearer what is needed, however when we come to services which co-working hub should offer, there is no “off the shelf pattern” we could use. There are some good practices, which emerge mainly based on “try and fix” principle.

In the P-IRIS project we have found two good practices, which we have analysed in details and learnt from. First good practice is coming from Finland - Luovasti (co-working and pop-up space for freelancers, entrepreneurs and remote workers) and the second good practice is coming from Norway - Fosshaugane Campus (informal technological network). Based on the site visits and in-depth interviews with the representatives of these two good practices we have prepared Action 2 where we will test following actions:

- »Inspire, Cheers, Brainstorm« event
- »Reading diaries« event
- “Strong promotion of the activities and members’ achievements”
- “Database of people and their skills and services/product they are offering”
- »Sharing and upgrading ideas« event
- “Pop-up space”
- “Little studio for photography and video production”
- “Recognize and get the local demand for the services/products of the members”
- “Equipment and Software at your disposal”
- “Workshops for the local environment / educational services”



2. Action

Our action is to build a sustainable model for co-working hub, which is based on small rural environments with the population 5.000 - 20.000 citizens. In order to do that we have to test a set of services we have selected from the interregional learning process. Based on the experience and information gathered during testing, we will adapt the services to local needs and eliminate those, which will not get enough traction in the local environment.

With our action we are going to influence a policy instrument in a way that MA will issue a call (or similar mechanism) where they will support the operational activities of a co-working hub in their early stages (in their first two years) of operation.

During the discussions and meetings with the MA we have learnt that before they will consider launching a call for a support of the early stage co-working hub, they need to know that there is enough know-how to run it successfully in a small rural environment.

Therefore, we have prepared a Pilot action. We are going to test methods for on-boarding members, for delivering adequate promotion in the local environment and to test which services newly established co-working hub should offer. We will test different methods, types of promotion and services from the pool of knowledge we got in the process of interregional learning process. In particular, we will focus on Luovasti and Fosshaugane Campus good practices. Detailed list of activities is described in the document "Pilot Action request". At the end of testing we will build a model for the development of the co-working hub in a small, rural environments.

3. Players involved

Development Centre of the Heart of Slovenia

Its role is to successfully implement Pilot Action and build a model for the successful operation of rural co-working hub in the small towns. At the same time, it will try to influence the MA to change the policy instrument in a way that rural co-working hub will get the opportunity to get financing for the first stage of their operations.



Municipality of Litija

Its main role is to comment the model of the rural co-working hub and to change the policy instrument in a way that they will launch the call where rural co-workings could apply for funding their activities in the first two years of their operations.

Municipality of Šmartno pri Litiji

Its main role is to comment the model of the rural co-working hub and to change the policy instrument in a way that they will launch the call where rural co-workings could apply for funding their activities in the first two years of their operations.

Local initiative who will establish a legal organization to run a co-working hub - "RISE"

Its main role is to help to cooperate in testing and to collect and transfer as much as possible information regarding testing activities, feedbacks and results to "Development Centre of the Heart of Slovenia".

4. Timeframe (document an early implementation)

September 2019 - December 2020.

5. Costs and funding sources

Pilot action is estimated in the value of 78.612 EUR and is requested by "Pilot action Request" in the project by "Development Centre of the Heart of Slovenia".

6. Results (quantitative or qualitative)

The main result will be "Innovative model for the development of the co-working hub in small, rural environments." The model will be based on the comprehensive testing in the three major actions:

- Testing different ways/actions for effective on-boarding of new members
- Testing different marketing channels for effective communication with different stakeholders
- Testing different co-working hub's services



The model could become a tool for the local initiatives who would like to start their co-working hubs and business networks in the rural environment. On the other side, it will be a guideline for the MA when they will consider some calls for the support to build innovative networks or enhancing innovations in their rural territories.

A long-term result is to have an appealing environment for small entrepreneurs, freelancers, young entrepreneurs, creative people etc. This will positively contribute to decreased daily migration to larger cities. In contrary, we would like to achieve that entrepreneurs from the cities would start to consider coming to small towns for living and working.

Signature

NAME AND POSITION: Mojca Štepic, acting director of the Development Centre of the Heart of Slovenia

DATE: 28/06/2019

SIGNATURE and STAMP:

