



THEMATIC SEMINAR, 29.04.2011

VENEZIA - PALAZZO DELLA REGIONE VENETO

MINUTES

1. Welcome and Introduction by Michele Peloso (Regione Veneto)

2. General Remarks on the Status of the Project (aws)

- Roswitha Mosburger gave a project status overview and introduced the main topics of the day.

3. WP1 - Financials/Reporting/Project changes (aws)

- Andrea Waclik asked the ERDF PPs' to send their declarations by 18.05.2011 for submission with the **4th Progress Report**. She explained that SID Bank must claim P3.1 and P3.2 expenditure within the 4th Progress Report if they don't want to lose it.
- She informed the PPs that in case of a **project prolongation until March 2012**, the last reporting period will last longer than usual (7 months). She suggested requesting a project prolongation until 31.03.2012 **with all operative project activities to be concluded by February 2012**. When asked, nobody of the present PPs raised objections concerning the prolongation. The request will be submitted to the JTS before the summer. All partners need to check with their national funding institutions the prolongation of national co-financing contracts.
- All of the present PPs (TETALAP and UKIM FME were excused) had already checked with their **national cofinancing authorities** on a preliminary basis, whether such a project prolongation would be possible. All of them reported that there would be no problem with it. Only GEORAMA had received no reply yet and said they will inform the LP by email
- Andrea said she would get the approval also of TETALAP and UKIM FME before going ahead with the prolongation request. Even tough, with the prolongation in mind, WP5 and WP7 should be completed by the end of December 2011 and WP4 and 6 finalized by February 2012.
- As far as **budget shifts** are concerned, Andrea reminded that, according to the PPs' needs submitted so far to the LP, it is still possible to make some changes but she asked all PPs to reduce the number of changes to the minimum.
- Then she gave a brief overview over the main outcomes of the **midterm evaluation**:
 - With regard to the main project results, WP 1,3,5,7 are well on track (green light).
 - WP4 has had some delays and more support is needed from the partners for drafting/implementing the new instruments (yellow light).
 - Problems were especially identified for WP 2 and 6 (red light). Communication and dissemination activities (especially Local Support Group Meetings) need to be generally enhanced by all PPs in order to increase stakeholder inclusion. Roswitha repeated her suggestion from the Steering Group meeting that all PPs should report on any meetings with stakeholders and/or externals, since these also correspond to LSGMs. For WP6, initial delays due to the late start of activities accumulated with additional delays during WP implementation. Moreover, flows of communication and coordination between the WP-Leader, its subcontractor, and the involved PPs need to be improved. The partners discussed and planned measures to recover quickly and catch up with the delays.
- Concerning the **Guidelines and Recommendations manual** (WP2), Andrea proposed that the LP would elaborate a concept, which will be circulated among the partners in July. The PPs should then draw their conclusions and lessons learned from project implementation until October. The final version of the handbook should be ready by December 2011.



4. State of WP2, WP4, WP5 and WP7

WP2: Communication and dissemination (UEFISCDI)

- Marius Mitroi introduced the improvements made to the SEE-IFA **website**, in particular the restructuring of the public area and the update of the intranet. He invited all partners to publish the SEE-IFA link on their institutional websites. He asked all PPs to upload all presentations/slides related to the meetings they have hosted according to a list he would distribute.
- Any LSG-Meetings of the PPs should be reported, even if they were informal, since it was one of the most criticized issues of the midterm evaluation that local stakeholders were not involved adequately by all PPs. More LSG meetings have to be scheduled for the remaining project time.
- The **5th newsletter** will be prepared by UEFISCDI until end May and sent to the LP, to be disseminated in June. All PPs were invited to send their contributions to Marius (also in local language) to increase the local content of the newsletter. Marius will send a reminder on that.

WP4: Instruments (Finlombarda)

- Francesco Cannatelli illustrated the **status** of WP4.
- **Prefeasibility studies (PFS)** on the Innovation Support Programme have been elaborated for Greece, FYROM and Hungary:
 - Greece: the economic crisis prevents the implementation of a Guarantee Fund;
 - FYROM: the market respectively the government institutions seem not to be ready for such an instrument. Besides, a fund existed before, but it gave very poor results (4 projects out of 8 failed, skills are missing);
 - Hungary: 8 guarantee funds are already in place and Hungary is not interested in starting a new one. Moreover, there is an ongoing initiative with the JEREMIE fund for innovation measures.
- For the other partners, the following steps have been accomplished:
 - Varazdin/Croatia: a draft guidelines document for a new instrument has been elaborated;
 - Vojvodina/Serbia: the commitment and the budget are available for preparing the implementation of a pilot, possibly in the area of agro-innovation.
 - Bulgaria: the draft PFS document for a Seed Fund has been released;
- Concerning **Metadistretti**, a **Technical Meeting** on the instrument will be organized in Milan instead of Ljubljana on May 24th, to be able to invite also the programme manager. Andrea Waclik reminded the PPs (UEFSICDI and SID Bank) to bring also relevant stakeholders who are concretely interested in implementing such an instrument in their countries.
- Francesco summarized that so far, he could see realistic chances for implementation of a new instrument in Croatia, Serbia and Bulgaria. For Romania and Slovenia it is still not clear.
- He reminded all PPs to provide him with their "**Criteria document**", a questionnaire assessing the possibilities to implement a new financial instrument in each PP country, by focusing on the political will, existence of a managing authority and budget. He will re-send it to be filled in and returned by the partners by 6th May 2011.

WP5: Cross border patent fund (aws)

- Alex Blauensteiner reported that while the Demand Analysis and Feasibility Study have been accomplished, the **Assessment of financing possibilities** is still in progress.
- He explained that up to now, it is not likely to get sufficient national funds for the SEE.IP fund, eg. from ministries. Therefore, the European Commission/EIF will be key for any fund establishment. In particular, the **EIF** has commissioned a study to St. Gallen University (CH) on IP financial market and set up a Working Group regarding the establishment of an EU IP Investment Fund. They have expressed their interest in the WP5 feasibility study and collaboration with the SEE IFA



consortium represented by aws might be a possible outcome. An EIF response concerning an involvement in the Working Group was expected by beginning of May.

- Alex will send a short marketing text and the **Selection Criteria** to the PPs by May 20th, to identify up to 3 local IP for potential investments. The target is to identify at least 3 pilot projects overall by autumn 2011. Final Recommendations will be sent to the European Commission in Dec 2011.

WP7: Capacity building (aws)

- Roswitha Mosburger presented the current status of WP7. The majority of activities have been implemented in time and the overall progress of the WP is satisfactory.
- The **Train-the-trainer** seminars have been completed in April 2011 with a workshop in Varazdin.
- Two **internships** have been completed (1 Trainee from Croatia and Serbia each in aws). The last internship for FYROM staff in aws is scheduled from Aug-Dec 2011, though not yet confirmed.
- The **ITC on Project Assessment** will be implemented in Vienna in June 2011.

5. WP6 – State and Next Steps

WP6: The Agency (Regione Veneto / Veneto Innovazione)

- It was discussed that the stage of the WP was far behind the plans, which was also stated as a problem in the mid term evaluation. Since the subcontract of Regione Veneto with Veneto Innovazione obviously did not cover all activities which needed to be carried out and furthermore did not cover the case of Bulgaria as well, Roswitha asked Regione Veneto to find a solution soon, since the project end is approaching and work has to be continued fast.
- Roswitha adverted to the current situation in the IPA countries and also in Bulgaria, where EPF had several meetings with stakeholders, which were interested in setting up a new IFA together with a planned new instrument of WP4. Further activities have to be discussed in a meeting in Bulgaria as soon as possible.
- Then, Ivan Boesso presented the current status of WP6. The **needs assessment** had been performed and the report released at the end of 2010. For this purpose, three technical meetings with IPA partners and their stakeholders, aws and Veneto Innovazione had been held in Varazdin, Skopje and Belgrade. As next step, Veneto Innovazione plans to elaborate concrete IFA models.
- Ivan illustrated some **IFA models**, showing the future trends and challenges for IFAs in Europe. He concluded that it is not easy to decide whether a general (UK) or focused approach (FR) is the best one and if it is better to provide services directly or to act as a catalyst; this is a challenge that has to be dealt with taking in consideration the local/regional variables.
- Mariasole D'Orazio suggested aiming at “smart specialisation”, as suggested by the EC.
- She presented IFA experiences in Europe, trying to compare the **context** they grew in with the three IPA countries, and then sketching the possible scenarios for the new IFAs. As context variables, she used the dimensions strong vs. weak structures and growing vs. stagnating/declining economy.
- Then the opinions of the IPA PPs concerning their own countries/regions were collected:
 - **Serbia**: For Banat, similarities with the weak economy/strong structures model were recognized. Three agencies work on innovation at regional level, there are strong relations with local stakeholders and the overall innovation structure is stronger than in other Serbian regions. Nonetheless, the Serbian PP showed interest in the Maramures approach to clusters development.
 - **Croatia**: AZRA representatives expressed no position since the Varazdin economy is healthy and good structures are in place; however, there is wide room for improvement.
 - Even though **Macedonian** representatives did not attend the Thematic Seminar, the participants agreed that for FYROM, the most similar model is one with a weak economy. There are plenty of players but they are poorly coordinated, this implying sometimes a duplication of roles and functions.

- **Possible scenarios for IPA PPs:**

- Croatia /Varazdin County:

- AZRA representatives added that among the strong sectors in Varazdin, it is necessary to include the traditional ones: production, wood, textile, food industry. They commented that the county is a small entity not ready for specialization but on the cooperation side it is already working with other regions in order to create a guarantee fund at national level.
- Veneto Innovazione suggested to concentrate on:
 - **Coordination:** creating linkages between available public resources and establishing a relation with HAMAG (Agency for SME promotion);
 - **Monitoring and assessment:** improve already existing services, creating a county observatory to perform economic intelligence and to foster cooperation with GARA concerning the project assessment service;
 - **Business services:** sell first-rate services by developing financial services in cooperation with GARA, supporting services in cooperation with the Science Park and creating own networking services for the development of clusters.
- Due to the short time, where detailed bilateral discussions were not foreseen, it was proposed that Veneto Innovazione and AZRA have a videoconference to continue their discussion.

- Serbia / Vojvodina Province:

- The RDA Banat representatives explained that an association of meat producers is creating a cluster, but since the companies are very small and two big companies control a majority of the market, there is no competition.
- Irena Zivkovic of RDA Banat also reported of a recent communication by the ministry, that there should be a focus on agroinnovation, eg in the area of cattle or milk production, which shall be included in the new strategy.
- Mariasole suggested that good organizational practices at European level should be taken into account.
- Veneto Innovazione suggested concentrating on:
 - **Coordination:** Instead of an IFA, which seems difficult to be established due to a lack of interest at national level, a virtual platform connecting relevant stakeholders could be created. The RDA should find a clear role in the platform, ideally as the coordinator by exploiting existing relations with the local stakeholders and the national institutions;
 - **Entrepreneurship:** The RDA should work on training and skill development activities in order to create a managerial and business oriented culture. It could provide financial and support services in coordination with national level actors;
 - **Innovation promotion:** A good marketing strategy is needed to raise awareness towards strategic topics (quality, innovation, IPR). Events and prize competitions i.e. in the food sector could encourage the involvement of the local actors.

- FYROM:

- Since FYROM representatives were missing, a brief overview of the local context and envisaged solutions was given by Veneto Innovazione
- Veneto Innovazione suggested concentrating on:
 - **Entrepreneurship:** Services to start-ups, like business competitions, incubators and coaching should be emphasized. Work should focus on early stage and seed management and on boosting the entrepreneurial attitude.
 - **Monitoring and assessment:** create a country observatory to perform country studies and sell consulting services to Ministries on project assessment;



- **International services:** attract business angels and capital ventures, provide soft landing services for incoming companies and boost internationalization for local companies.
- Regarding the portfolio of the new IFA, it was suggested to discuss at the planned meeting in Skopje the activities NCDIEL is already performing and how these could best be complemented. It is evident, that this would not involve a financing role due to a lack of skills and organizational structure. However, collaboration with financing institutions would be a feasible option, e.g. with the project assessment carried out by the center.
 - In order to become experts in business assessment and support, Francesco Cannatelli suggested the agency to hire skilled people experienced in business and innovation to reinforce the current staff.
- **Next steps for WP6:**
 - Find a solution for better input of Veneto Region or a subcontractor to improve the path of the WP
 - Seek contact with stakeholders in the IPA countries
 - Meeting in FYROM to discuss the services portfolio (July 2011);
 - Meeting with stakeholders for a new IFA in Bulgaria at the beginning of July;
 - Meeting in Serbia/Vojvodina in autumn.
 - Videoconference with AZRA;
 - Telephone contact with RDA Banat to discuss on clusters and rural development issues.
 - Once agreed the model and the mission of the IFAs with IPA countries, the partners will work on the legal framework of IFA in FYROM.
 - Michele Peloso promised to send out information within the next days about possibilities to link up with the stakeholders.

6. Next Steps, Timeframe and Conclusion (all)

- Finally, the next steps for the SEE IFA project were summarized and completed by setting up the timeplan for the next months.
- The meeting concluded with some final remarks and a working lunch.