

**GUT REPORT OF 4.5. “FIRST
STEPS OF
INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF
THE COUNSELLING TOOLBOX
AND THE SUPPORTING
TOOLBOX” NOVEMBER, 2020**

Work Package 4.5

4.5.1. Training to all intermediaries who serve SME owner-managers by HEI instructors

4.5.2. Training by HEI instructors to all relevant intermediary managers

4.5.3. Training to Communication, ICT and office staff in the intermediary organizations by INT managers

4.5.4. The intermediary representatives in the operational teams to all SME

This report summarizes the content of and participants’ feedback on a workshop’ sessions held on 6th November 2020, carried out as part of the institutionalization of the counselling toolbox and the supporting toolbox. The two workshop sessions were combined in one day due to participants’ request, partly overlapping and had common reflection session.

In accordance with the institutionalization plan, both HEI and INT participated in carrying out these workshop sessions. The HEI was primarily responsible for conducting the training, INT were involved in recruiting the participants and holding the practical-case study workshop part. There were nine participants taking part in the workshop sessions. Basic information on the participants was collected at the pre-workshop stage to ensure the participants are from targeted groups.

The workshops sessions consisted of several parts covering discussion and lecture topics, as well as group activities. The objectives of sessions of the workshops were:

- to build competence of **operating the Toolbox Portal in the entire counselling process - especially the Spider Web tool**
- to enhance capacity in transforming small companies **using the Business Model as a tool supporting the 6-step innovation process methodology.**

The workshop sessions were conducted online on the Zoom platform. Participants were asked to work on equipment with webcams and microphones - for maximum interactivity.

At the end of the workshop sessions, a common interactive reflection and feedback session was organized to follow up on workshop outcomes, gauge the utility and success of the workshop, and determine whether such workshops would be useful in the future and, if so, whether they could be improved. Attendees actively participated in the reflection session and evaluated the workshop very positively with all of the comments from all the issued areas ranging from good to excellent.

Specifically, all the participants agreed that the training session fulfilled their expectations. Some of them added that it even exceeded what they were expecting. Overall, attendees characterized the workshop as very useful and targeting the right impediments to innovation advisory process with smaller companies. One participant commented that it provided a unique way for intermediaries to crystallize a plan for combatting barriers to raising innovative potential of SMEs.

The material for the training session was perceived as effective and accurate. They were very satisfied with the workshop speakers and the topics discussed. The structure and methodology of the training session was recognised as very clear. The practical session of using the Spider Web tool was pointed at as particularly helpful since it is a very interactive, visual and ready to use tool, open to everybody and freely available. Some participants from the private sector were

even surprised that it was available to them free to use in their private advisory companies. The duration of the workshop session was evaluated as sufficient.

All participants agreed that the extent of the workshop session helped them to understand the essence of the subject. Participants commented positively the strong focus on intermediaries as agents for change. Participants also reported increased awareness, knowledge gains, and collaboration and implementation ideas because of the workshop. Additionally, participants commented that they enjoyed the opportunity to network at the workshop. Others said they became aware of best practices for enhancing firm involvement in the innovation advisory process.

Workshop participants were asked to provide suggestions and recommendations on how future workshops could be improved. Attendees had specific recommendations for improving future workshops, mainly by providing best practice cases of successful implementation of the 6-step innovation process. One participant noted that it is hard to achieve major outcomes and affect from a single workshop, and that, although people may know what to do, they may not be able to implement it because of lack of resources, or external factors, like the ongoing pandemic.

From the organizers point of view, it was observed that some participants seemed more driven and dedicated than others were. Factors such as institutional resistance and motivation for innovation advisory for smaller firms should be considered when targeting workshop attendees in order to optimize outcomes.

