Pilot action template including links between regional playparks and the transnational network

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1. Project summary and document introduction

Change is still needed to make the cities and regions in Central Europe better places to work and live. Daring young entrepreneurs with brilliant ideas could contribute considerably to this change. But they can't. Factors such as a lack of an entrepreneurial culture and mind-set leading to a limited interest in entrepreneurship are hampering their efforts. There is also inadequate training to improve their skills and entrepreneurial competences and innovation in general is being hampered by the lingering effects of the historical east-west divide and the recent economic crisis through an underinvestment in R&D.

And yet, entrepreneurs must be empowered to create change; they "form the majority of business entities and are the biggest employers" in Central Europe. "It is important to provide, at regional level, the right mix of financial and non-financial support to assist entrepreneurs to create new firms." "And this is our goal. By mid-2019, we will contribute to a change in the way entrepreneurs are inspired, trained and supported through a balanced package of strategies, actions plans, pilot actions, training, and tools to create new-type comprehensive regional innovation ecosystems in seven Central Europe regions. With our three-step logical project approach (Development – Implementation – Improvement), we want entrepreneurs and SMEs to benefit the most from what we do. But also their regions will benefit because from now on regional smart specialization strategies will be further used to develop novel technologies, and brilliant products and services for economic and social innovation." The joint development of all outputs and a transnational network interlinking the regional ecosystems to improve international skills emphasize the project's transnational character. At present, there is presumably no such state-of-the art innovative support scheme in Central Europe. "That is why everything that we do will be transferable for the benefit of others."

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WORK PACKAGE T2 will implement the new-type comprehensive six-domain regional innovation ecosystems in PP regions to train and create new firms, above all through synergies with funding initiatives.

It will also implement the trans. network that interlinks the ecosystems to accelerate international SME growth. T2 pilot actions will implement, test and evaluate the T1 eConcepts, leading to strategy finalisation. T2 will produce four outputs to achieve Project SO2/Results.

Output O.T2.1: Reg. Playparks: 7x reg. pilot actions for innovation ecosystems implementation in PP regions through two activities: (1) Development: Pilot action template for six-domain reg. ecosystems, leading to (2) Implementation: Reg. Playparks in PP Regions based on reg. pilot actions.

Output O.T2.2: Playparks network: 1x trans. pilot action for innovation ecosystems network implementation through two activities: (1) Development: Pilot action template for trans. network incl. links between reg. Playparks and the network, leading to (2) Trans. Pilot Action tailored to and implemented in the project area.

Output O.T2.3: Playparks network: Joint Playpark staff training through two activities: (1) Initial joint trans. training of Playpark staff and after the 1st cohort training experience at the reg. Playparks (2) Augmented joint trans. training of Playpark staff.

Output O.T2.4: Playparks network: Training methodology and materials ePortfolio through one activity: (1) Training methodology and materials for Playpark staff training. Process-related communication aims to increase the commitment of the target group (policy/support/SME/funding initiatives) and to create a positive attitude towards the Playparks and network.

Led by an experienced start-up/SME support provider (PP10), all project partners will be involved in all WP activities. T2 is the logical result of T1 and prepares the way for T3.

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Deliverable D.T2.3.1 Pilot action template including links between regional Playparks and the transnational Network

PP develop a pilot action template for innovation ecosystems network implementation with linkages: reg. Playparks and Playparks network. The template will be the basis for the reg. pilot action leading to Deliverable D.T2.4.2 (Pilot action for the project area and implementation of the trans. ecosystems network).

This document is intended to provide the framework for the precise creation and implementation of the CERIecon Network envisaged as an **active transnational network of innovation ecosystems in project regions**.

2. The CERIecon Network: setting the scene

The key logic of this concept for CERIecon's transnational network is:

- to leverage resources and capacities created by the CERIecon project;
- to create transnational network services and activities based on learnings and insights gathered during the CERIecon project implementation;
- to involve local/regional network of business support organizations other than project stakeholders in CERIecon network for better dissemination of its effects and gaining synergy effect.

The proposed logic aims to assure sustainable additional use of CERIecon capacities after the project ends – capacities that are cost effective, pragmatic and result oriented.

The proposed framework should enable partners to identify key beneficiaries, areas, interests and elements that will enable learning and decision making process during the CERIecon project duration. It should lead to a coherent and self-sustainable network vision that will be documented in D.T2.4.2 - Pilot action for the project area and implementation of the trans. ecosystems network.

The pilot action template including links between regional Playparks and the transnational Network aims to enable a clear description of key elements that will define the transnational Network, its functionalities and sustainability:

- target groups / beneficiaries of networks value proposition;
- target regional/local businesses and sectors with internationalization potential;
- list of proposed network activities (delivered through joint activities of two or more PPs) that will create value for the target groups/beneficiaries - the Network's activities will be assessed from the aspect of complementing existing entrepreneurial ecosystems from 6 domains perspective;
- basic rules of procedure and standards of doing business/basic services and additional services offered by each network member;
- network infrastructure, related costs and responsibilities;
- membership structure, sustainability and enlargement rules and procedures.

In order to assure applicability and high implementation level, this pilot action template's main goal is to enable learning and insights capturing during the project.

3. Target groups and beneficiaries of the transnational network

The CERIecon transnational Network will target two distinctive user groups with respective possible activities – entrepreneurs/startups and entrepreneurial support organization in a very broad sense – it is expected that the transnational network will address each PP's needs and capabilities.

During project implementation PPs will identify benefits that the transnational network might create and create a plan for its deployment and sustainability.

The **key target beneficiaries** of the transnational network are **early stage entrepreneurs**, start-ups, existing young and innovative start-ups, scientists/students with entrepreneurial idea, innovative companies with need for testing the markets etc.

Each partner will scan the needs of the three cohorts' participants to identify their needs and potential benefits that the transnational network might provide to entrepreneurs and startups.

The transnational network is not a substitute for the "local ecosystems" – it should complement and address the entrepreneurial ecosystems challenges that are not addressed well on the local or national level (or impossible to address on the local level).

Possible areas for the transnational network and its activities are:

- internationalization support;
- soft landing services;
- foreign market research support;
- partner search for start-up and scale-up support;
- cooperation and staff exchange;
- networking etc.

During project implementation, each project partner will gather deeper insights and information about specific user groups as potential network beneficiaries, problems and needs of each user group, as well as possible solutions.

Each partner will conduct the assessment **during and immediately after the first cohort activities**. The assessments will serve as input for D.T2.4.2 - Pilot action for the project area and implementation of the trans. ecosystems network.

Template for user group identification and analysis:

Startup user group or sector (name and description of user group, circumstances of doing business, specific products, technologies etc.)	Problem/opportunity to pursue for specific startup categories (problem/challenge description, identification and analysis from the domain perspective)	Solution (how the network or particular network partners can address the problem/opportunity)
User group 1	Problem/opportunity 1	Proposed solution1
User group 2	Problem/opportunity 2	Proposed solution2
User group 3		
Etc.		

User group identification will always start from identification of the industry in which the subject operates. Certain know-how exchange and cooperation may take place between Playparks with beneficiaries operating in the same or complementary industries.

If it turns out that certain industries are strongly represented in all 7 Playparks, the transnational network as a whole will try to prepare some kind of common support for these beneficiaries, like for example info about fairs, brokerage events or contests addressing these particular industries.

The proposed solutions should aim to create value for target groups and for the beneficiaries through joint activities of two or more PPs based on the network and established transnational relations. The identified solutions based on value created by the network will become the basis for the network's activities, services and future collaborative work of network partners.

The secondary target group of the transnational network are **PPs** themselves and similar entrepreneurial and startup scene support organizations, local administrations, higher education institutions etc.

Activities listed as solutions can serve as an initial list of network activities and services for which network capacities and capabilities should be built.

From the listed activities, PPs will identify their common needs and define the areas for the transnational network future use and sustainable cooperation.

Each PP should also carry out a self-assessment of categories of their activities and their access to capabilities and resources in order to define transnational network potentials:

	PP self assessment (yes/no)	Additional description
Category of activities		
Incubator		
Accelerator		
Science & Technology Park		
Organization managing Startup Competitions		
Organization managing Coworking Spaces		
Business Support and Development Agency		
Local/regional government		
Higher education institution		
"Access to" startup support capabilities and resources		
Networks (local, national, international)		
Private funding		
Public funding (regional, state, EU)		
Industry-sectors (strategic industry partners)		
Market research		
Infrastructure		

Possible transnational network activities, based on identified PPs capabilities and startup needs are:

- joint transnational startup/entrepreneurial support events;
- institutional cooperation in startup support programme;
- soft-landing programme;
- legal and accounting support;
- transnational market research and testing activities support;
- startup B2B partnerships support;
- best practice exchange;
- institutional cooperation in programme development and implementation;
- joint trainings, expert or programme certifications;
- meeting room and temporary office availability for transnational startup initiatives and soft landing activities etc.

Based on this concept, PPs will draft Deliverable D.T2.4.2 - Pilot action for the project area and implementation of the trans. ecosystems network.

4. Rules of procedure and services offered

In order to become truly operational, the transnational network should have:

- basic rules of procedure and standards of doing business;
- basic services and additional resources offered by each network member.

Regarding the basic rules of procedure and standards of doing business, PPs have to decide:

- how the network will be managed and operated;
- membership structure and enlargement rules and procedures;
- cost structure and sustainability principles.

In general, CERIecon's Rules of Procedure (D.M.1.2) and Letters of commitment for the sustainability of reg. Playparks and the Playparks network (D.T2.2.1) are the foundations for the creation of the transnational network basic rules of procedure and standards of doing business.

New, additional costs or investments are not envisaged. The basic features of the transnational network should be built upon existing PPs' capacities and on those created by the CERIecon project.

Each partner will decide on its level of commitment and in case that additional funding is required, is responsible for assuring additional funding either through their final beneficiaries or through public funding (local, regional, national or transnational).

4.1. Services and additional resources offered by each network member

The CERIecon partnership is made of very different institutions – from regional or city governments to universities, from industry associations and chambers to entrepreneurial support institutions.

Therefore, it is very difficult to define a common level of capacities and resources that should be dedicated by each PP and available to the transnational network.

As a starting point, Playparks, Playpark trainers and the Playpark programme are common capacities and should represent key elements of the transnational network establishment.

As an innovative and different solution to regional entrepreneurial ecosystem deficiencies, the transnational network should start as a low cost, pragmatic and result oriented "add-on" to regional playparks and their capacities.

In order to assure the complementary role of the transnational network to regional playparks, an assessment of the expected network influence towards existing entrepreneurial ecosystems from a 6 domains perspective is needed.

Thus, each partner is expected to assess the regional limitations of their regional entrepreneurial ecosystems, and to suggest activities and capabilities that have resulted from the transnational network, able to address the identified regional limitations.

The assessment will be conducted during the first cohort. Results and outcomes of the evaluation will be used as input for D.T2.4.2 - Pilot action for the project area and implementation of the trans. ecosystems network.

Domain	Regional limitations[1] of entrepreneurial ecosystems	Suggested activities and capabilities generated by the transnational network
Culture A conducive culture • Success stories • Societal norms		
Policy Facilitating policies and leadership • Leadership • Government		
Finance Availability of dedicated finance • Financial capital		
Human Capital Relevant human capital		
Markets Venture-friendly markets for products		
Support A wide set of institutional and infrastructural support		

The regional activities and expertise of each partner for the purposes of the transnational network will be listed in Deliverable D.T2.4.2.

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[1] Regional limitations have been identified partly in Deliverable D.T1.1.1. However, this table expects PPs to fill only those specific regional limitations that the Network can directly address and contribute to solve.

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