

Investing in Youth & Human Resources – Lower Austria's Innovation Assistant Program to Upgrade Firms' Innovation Capacity



Upgrading the Innovation Capacity of Existing Firms

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ERIK ACTION and INTERREGIONAL COOPERATION

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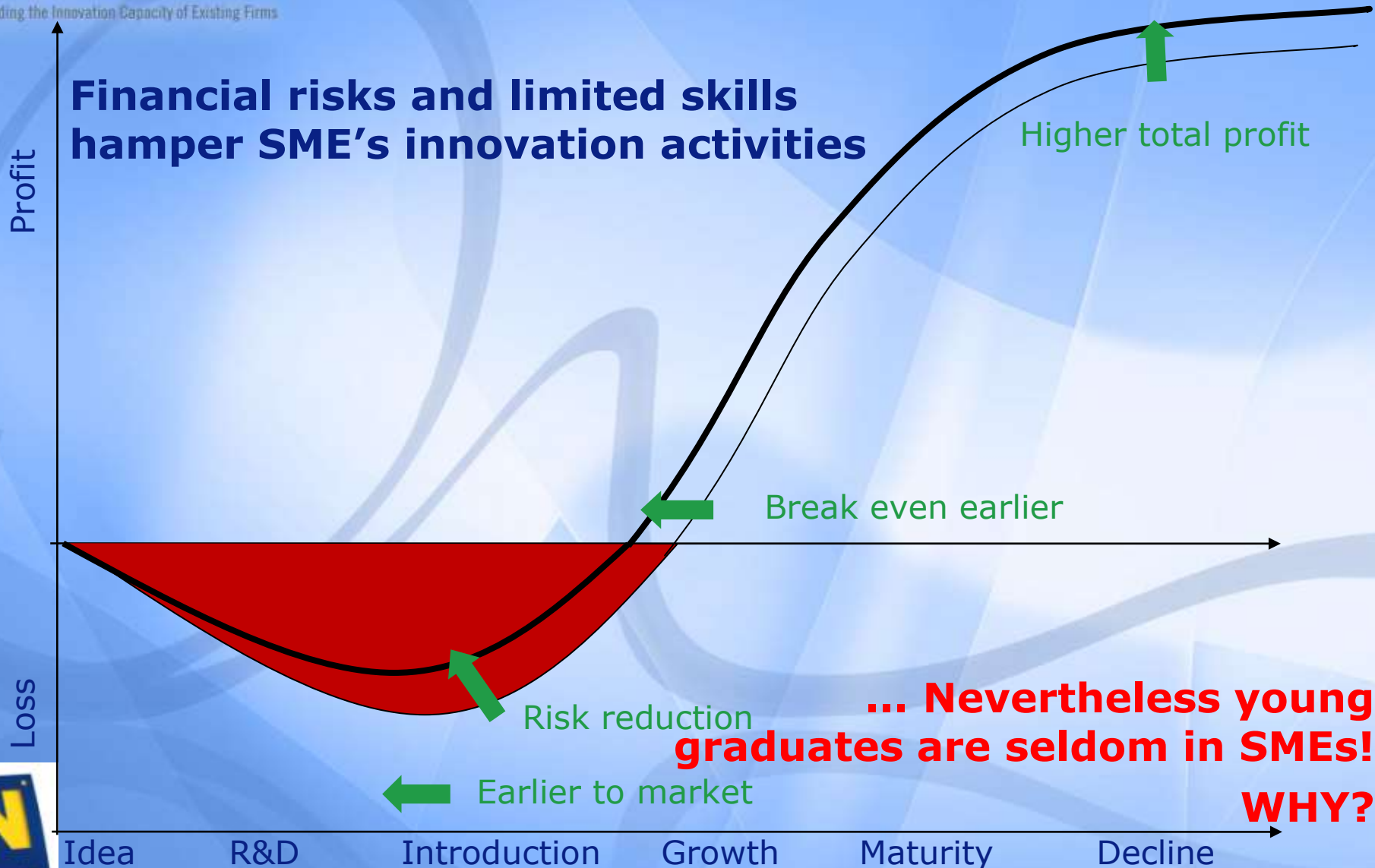


European Union
European Regional Development Fund



Content

- **Challenges in the field of investment in youth and human resources**
- **Impact of Lower Austria's Innovation Assistant Programme on firms' innovation capacity**
- **Lessons learnt from ERIK ACTION**



Challenges in the field of investment in youth and human resources – obstacles

- ☹ **Fear of contact with science**
- ☹ **„Young graduates are too expensive“**
- ☹ **Deficits in Business and HR strategy**
- ☹ **Geographical barriers**
- ☹ **Theoretical education**
- ☹ **Missing practice**
- ☹ **Weak links with SMEs**

SMEs

Higher Education

Obstacles hampering SMEs' innovation capacity

Young Graduates

- ☹ **Consider SMEs as less innovative**
- ☹ **Difficult access to SMEs**
- ☹ **Don't see carrier in SMEs**



Tools & Rules of the NÖ Innovation Assistant

- ☺ **Financial incentives for SMEs**
- ☺ **Coaching of SMEs by external consultant**
- ☺ **Specific and concrete innovation project**
- ☺ **Postgraduate tailor-made training program for Innovation Assistants**

SMEs

**Innovation Assistant
to foster SMEs'
innovation
capacity**

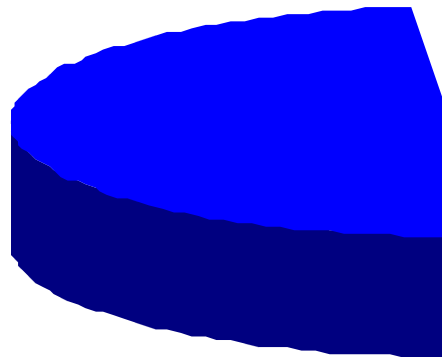
Higher Education

Young Graduates

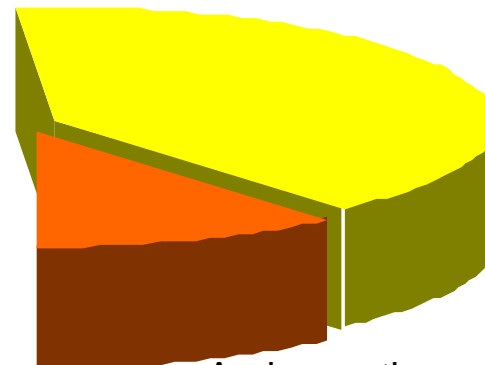
- ☺ **Clearly defined role within concrete innovation project**
- ☺ **With prospects for future carrier**
- ☺ **Networking with other IA**

Impact on SMEs: Improvement of Innovation Strategy

The company had
a clear, mid-term
innovation
strategy
47%

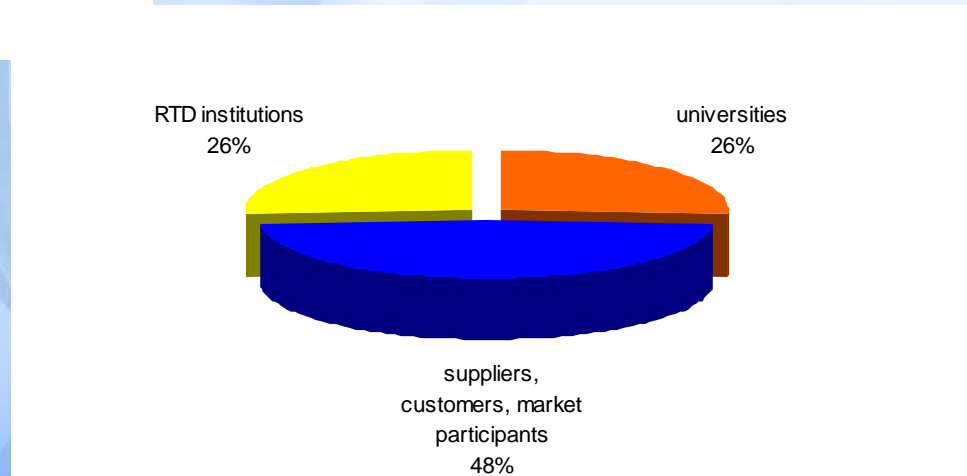
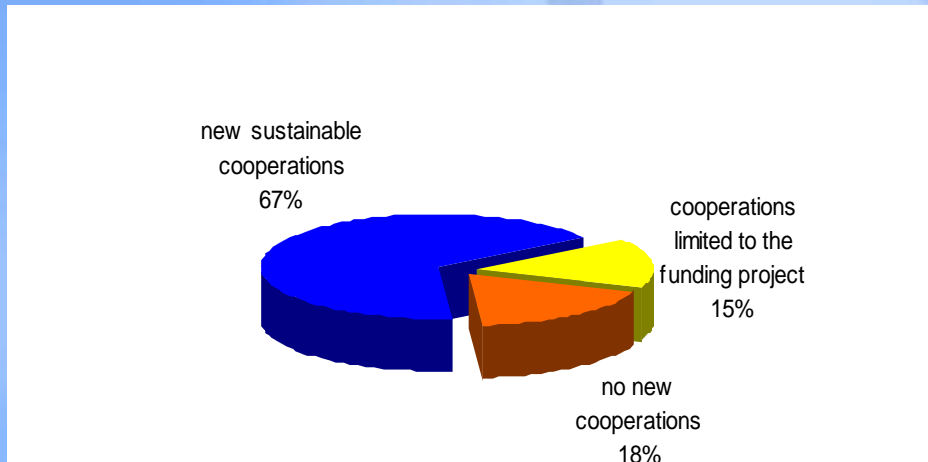


The company has
a rudimentary
innovation
strategy
41%

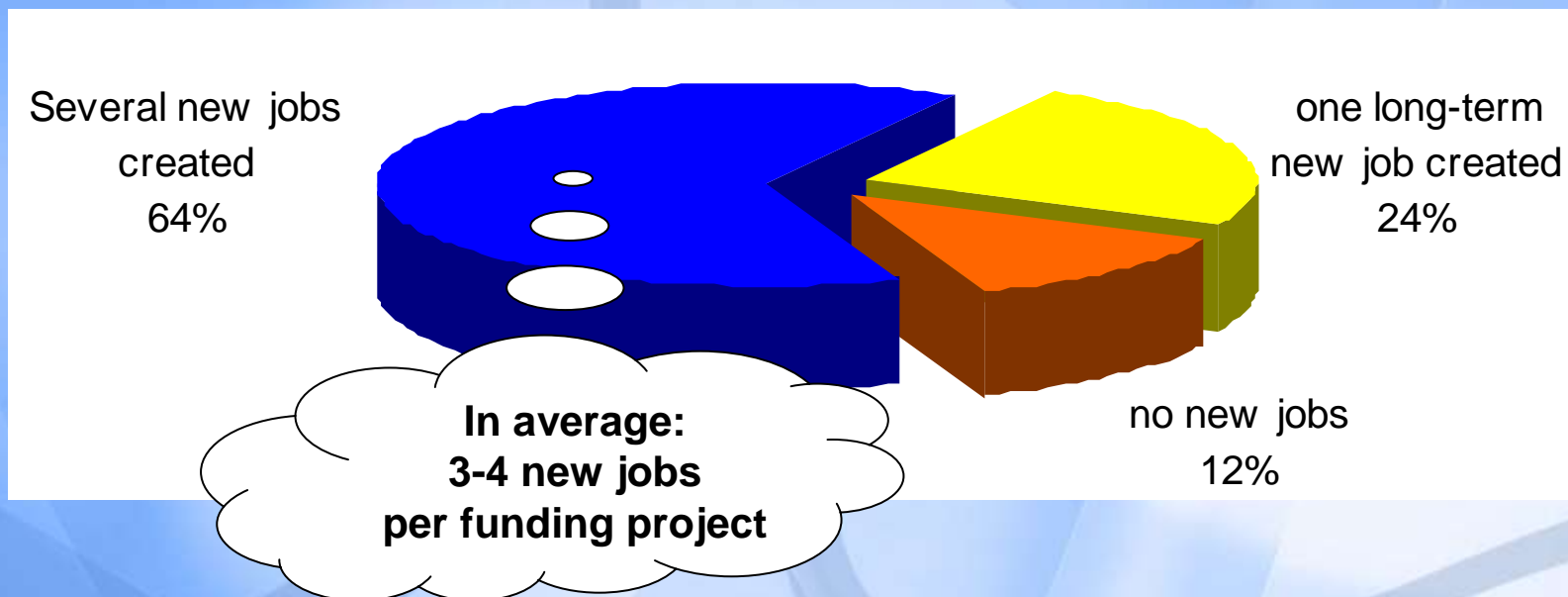


An innovation
strategy was
developed during
the funding project
12%

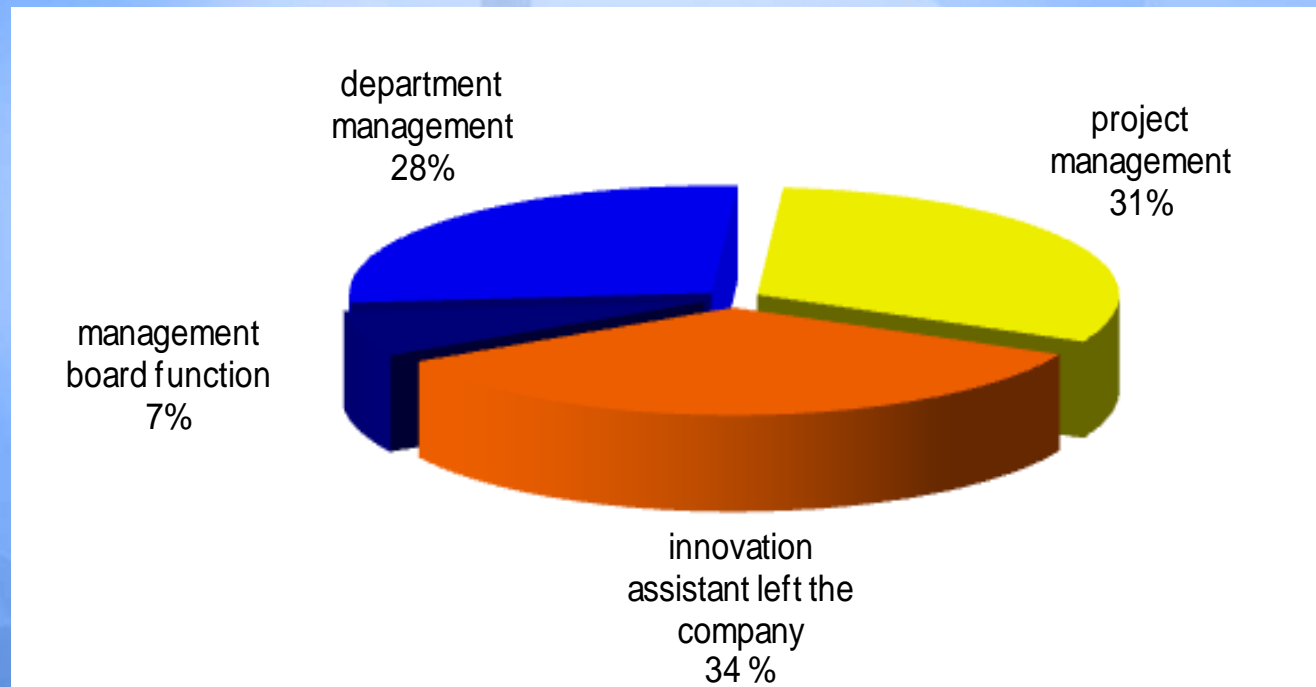
Impact on SMEs: Creation of new collaborations



Impact on SMEs: new jobs



Impact: Vocational prospects of Innovation Assistants



Lessons Learnt from ERIK ACTION

- **“Simplicity” and documented results attracted the majority of the ERIK ACTION partners to import (parts of) the NÖ Innovation Assistant**
- **Experiences of exporting the NÖ Innovation Assistant have underlined the strength of the innovation support system in NÖ**
 - **No problems with ERDF / ESF responsibilities**
Innovation policy co financed by ERDF
 - **Innovation Assistant integrated in holistic regional innovation system: lack of preparation support in other regions require a pre-stage to define concrete innovation projects in firms**
- **Improvement of the Innovation Assistant Programme in Lower Austria:**
 - **Open also for large companies**
 - **more experienced graduates also accepted, if they have been employed at a R&D institution**



WIR HABEN NOCH VIEL VOR!



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