

Fast Track Network ERIK ACTION: Innovation Assistant – a Transfer Example



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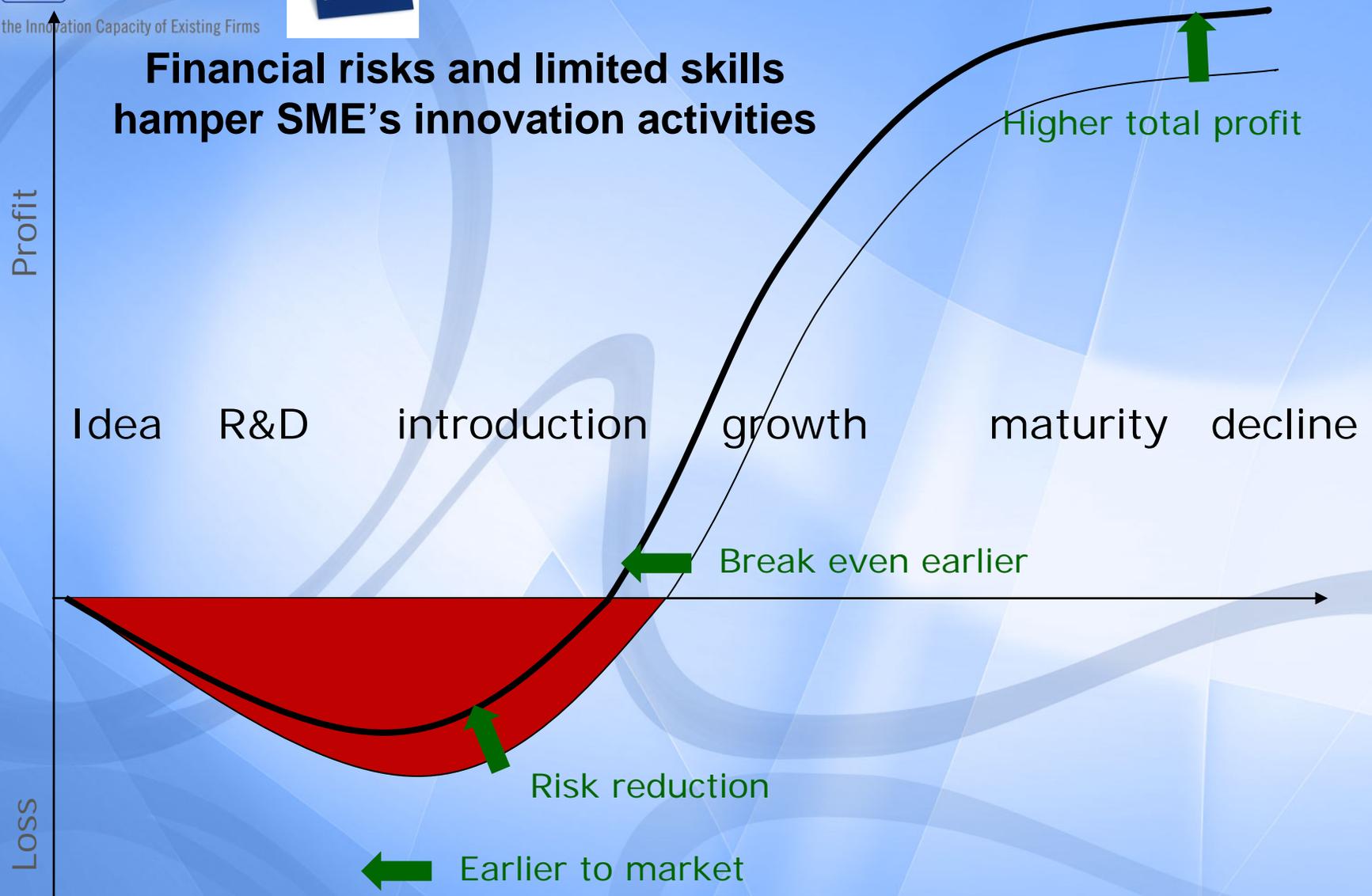


Innovation Assistant – objectives and scheme

- Fostering the innovation capability and culture within SMEs
- Stimulation of SMEs, especially with no or little experience with graduated employees,
- Innovation assistant must be a new employee and recently graduated (university or university of applied sciences).
- Innovation assistant has to be employed for a specific innovation project
 - Implementation of a specific innovation project within the SME (R&D, internal management and organisation, communication and information).
- open for SMEs of all sectors of industry and industry related services



Financial risks and limited skills hamper SME's innovation activities





Innovation Assistant – Type of support

- Funding for a maximum of 15 months
- Grant of the labor costs of the innovation assistant (50% for the first 8 months of employment, 35% for further max. 7 months) with a maximum amount of € 20.317,50
- De-Minimis Rule
- Mandatory training of the innovation assistant by a specially designed post graduated training program established at the Danube University Krems (100%)
- Funding of project and innovation assistant coaching (50 %, max. € 2.620,-) by an external consultant)
- Accompanied monitoring by an external consultant – 100 %

The transfer process within ERIK ACTION

- **Innovation Assistant**
 - what is this initiative and why was it chosen?
 - how does it fit with West Macedonian context / any similar actions?
- **Transfer process**
 - what activities have been carried out so far?
 - transfer experience in Western Macedonia (lessons learnt)?
- **Regional Delegations**
 - how have they been involved so far?
 - any obstacles?
 - how to involve ROP managing authorities?
- **Key success factors and next steps**

Strengths & Weaknesses in Western Macedonia

Strengths

- Location of the region
- Country's Energy Center (Public Power Corp.)
- Important tourist resources, natural ecosystems and rich cultural reserve
- Long history of commercial activity with the neighboring Balkan countries
- Important support structures to entrepreneurship and the regional administrative authorities
- Academic & Research Institutes (UOWM, TEI, ITESK)
- Increase quality of life (infrastructure development)
- Average growth rate higher of the respective rate at EU-25

Weaknesses

- Limited sector-based specialization & small share of high-tech and high value products.
- Weakness of production networks in combination with the decline of industrial activity and the non-dynamic services sector
- Long term unemployment
- Absence of foreign investments
- Inadequate links with the South and the economic centers
- Low capacity of transportation means (e.g. rail, air links)
- Environmental pollution due to the heavy industrial activity
- Low education & specialization levels of HR except the energy and leather sectors
- Low investment in R&D

Matching Platform

Experience Indicatively

K-CLUSTERS, ERIK+, RIS, RIS+, RITTS, SMART, TRACTORS, TRAINMAIN,

Strategic Development Plan on Research Technology and Innovation

R&D & Innovation

Knowledge Diffusion

Entrepreneurship

E-economy

- Increase SMEs capacity to invest in R&D
- Participate in thematic networks of advanced R&D which are competitive at international level
- Create better links between businesses and supporting institutions (e.g. Academic)
- Promote actions to convert knowledge into innovative products, processes and services and knowledge transfer especially to SMEs
- Support the creation of spin off companies, and obtain IPR
- Encourage entrepreneurial activity and promote innovative actions in business clusters within the region
- Increase competitiveness and internationalization of businesses, especially SMEs/ Create trans-european links for advertising products and services
- Promote new ICT services (e.g. e-government, e-health, e-business, e-learning, e-inclusion)

Does WM allow for integration of GPs from other regions

Political involvement necessary to implement the transfer processes has been identified.

- West Macedonia regional authorities actively participate in the transferring processes of the GP from and to other European regions
- learn from the GP results, create links with relevant industries at a transnational level in order to promote competitiveness and entrepreneurship and promote Innovation and business opportunities.
- the region's participation along with the Managing Authority of ROP of West Macedonia aims to align and reach the targets of the ROP Priority Axis on Increasing Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Competitiveness of business and increase the economic activity and development of the region.

Expected Outcomes

There are high expectations from the ERIC Action project regarding the transfer of good practices to the Region of Western Macedonia from other European Regions who implemented successfully these practices.

We are a “learning” region that has quite big problem in entrepreneurship spirit which need to be enhanced through targeting actions in terms of clustering of business in the same sector and adaptation of flexible actions for training of their employees and coaching of businesses.