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RAPPORT

Building RAPPORT between Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises and Public or Private Research Capabilities

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Coordinator	CENTRIM at the University of Brighton (UoB)
Deliverable Leading Partner	CENTRIM at the University of Brighton (UoB)
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1. Executive Summary

This Deliverable presents the protocol for the survey in the two main strands of the project: the programmes that support the link of SMEs with the public sector research and the programmes that follow a public-private partnership logic. The Deliverable starts with articulating its objectives and the points covered in each Section. It then covers the survey for the two strands of the programme, following a common structure: (i) the objectives of the survey (ii) the methodology that was followed to develop the protocol and (iii) the actual procedure to be followed for each survey. Probably the most valuable items of this deliverable are in the Annexes where the various survey protocols are offered.

2. Introduction

2.1 Objectives

This Deliverable aims to provide the protocol for conducting the Experts' Judgment Survey. The Experts' Judgment Survey (EJS) is the first part of an identification activity to understand good practices of knowledge and technology transfer support measures for Small and Medium Sized Enterprises. The EJS was actually split in two parts in line with the overall architecture of the project:

- A protocol was developed for surveying the programmes that support SMEs to link with public sector research (PSR) organisations
- A semi-structured interview was designed to carry out an exploratory research in the schemes that follow a public-private partnership (PPP) model.

These protocols together with the methodology followed to develop them and the implementation procedure are presented in this report.

2.2 What this deliverable covers

The deliverable consists of two parts and four Appendixes.

Section 3 describes the main objectives of the survey for the PSR programmes, the logic of the methodology and the plan that was followed to develop the instrument.

Section 4 presents the main objectives of the survey for the PPP programmes and the plan that was followed to develop the instrument.

Annex I provides the survey protocol for the survey of PSR programme managers while Annex II presents the survey protocol for the express survey of PSR programme managers (in case they offer a very limited time for interaction). Annex III shows the feedback sheet used to capture the experience of pilot interviews.

Finally, Annex IV provides the semi-structured questionnaire for the interviews with PPP managers.

3. Survey for the Public Sector Research Programmes

3.1 Objectives

The intention is to contact the managers or officers of support measures (national or regional programmes). The idea behind is that these managers have unique insights into the knowledge and transfer programmes they overview. The survey will focus on four main areas:

- i. the type of companies engaged in the programme;
- ii. the type of engagement with publicly funded organisations;
- iii. the identification of successful implementations of the programme and finally
- iv. the referral to other knowledge and technology transfer programmes aiming at SMEs of lower innovation capability

3.2 Development Methodology

The project followed a structured methodology to develop the protocol. Firstly, the PRO-INNO database was checked to see its suitability for accessing KTT programmes for SMEs. Then a small development team developed a first version of the protocol, that is the survey instrument (questionnaire) and the guidelines for the interviewer.

The first version of the protocol was discussed in the full consortium meeting to take into account the local specificities. In the next step the protocol was discussed with the Advisory Board, which paid special emphasis on relating the survey to the overall methodology of the project. Following these interactions, a 2nd version of the protocol was developed which was then tested with two programmes managers.

The feedback gained through these interviews was used to develop a 3rd version of the questionnaire which was passed to all partners for piloting the instrument in the region they are responsible for.

A feedback sheet was given to the partners to capture the experience of the interview (Annex III). Some partners kept a diary of the critical incidents throughout the process of identifying the programme manager, book a telephone appointment with him or her, conducting the survey and receiving follow-up information from them. The following passage is from Neha Rai, the Research Fellow working for University of Sussex:

“During my expert contact database compilation, I observed that many schemes are launched/ supervised by one agency (govt department) and administered by another agency. I would suggest collecting the contact information of both the managers, as the administering

manager may sometime know more about the scheme than the supervising/launching manager.

Also, please keep in mind that in some instances, multiple (more than one) schemes/programmes fall within the managerial scope of an expert/head. It will be nice if we can identify operational managers of each scheme (besides the Head of the programme), if possible.

I also experienced that within UK, various government departments have recently merged. This has caused reshuffling of various Managers and Heads in the recent past. It might happen in cases of other countries too. Please keep that into consideration.

Within the scheme information sheets, Pro Inno database also sometimes mentions the names of scheme managers. Kindly validate this information by calling/ mailing the respective departments. As most names were either too obsolete information (the manager had probably changed) or they were only names of press officers or media relations officer (which might not be useful for our purpose).

I also experienced that in case of regional innovation schemes of government department (For e.g. department of Business, Innovation and Skills, UK), some of the schemes are administered at the Regional Development Agency (RDA) level, although supervised by a ministerial department (BIS). It will be useful to collect the names of the managers at the regional level, as sometimes they know more about the scheme than the actual head.”

The Feedback collected was used to develop the 4th and final version of the protocol which is attached to this report (Annex I).

One of the requests received during this process was to develop an “Express Version” of the programme for respondents that offer only a very concise window of opportunity. The Express version was developed (Annex II) keeping the same numbering of the original protocol in order to facilitate the comparative analysis later on.

3.3 The PSR Survey Procedure

The protocol includes the instrument (a set of questions to be explored in the interview) as well as a number of complimentary items to enable a smooth operation of the whole process. These items include the following:

- A support letter from the European Commission to assist with securing an interview
- Guidelines on the information needed (ideally) before the conduct of the interview
- Guide notes for the interviewer to introduce himself/herself to the respondent
- Guide notes to facilitate and support the interaction with the respondent.

Each partner should collate information about the various programmes in the region he is responsible for and then select the most interesting programmes to target as a first priority. Following the advice of the Advisory Board a *biased sample* is sought

with 50% of the interviewed programmes targeting SMEs of high absorptive capacity and 50% targeting SMEs of lower absorptive capacity (see Deliverable 2.1 for definitions).

At least half of the managers, each partner interviews should be from schemes of low absorptive capacity. In addition to the PRO-INNO database, the partner should look for programmes supporting SMEs of low absorptive capacity in other databases or through the networks of his/her organisation. These could be programmes run regionally or even locally. Given the challenge to identify schemes of low absorptive capacity, the final question of actual questionnaire invites the respondent to suggest other programmes (besides his or hers) that involve SMEs of low absorptive capacity.

As for the actual instrument it included six areas:

- Part 1: Introduction to the Respondent
- Part 2: Contact Details (Questions 1-6)
- Part 3: Companies Participating to the Programme (Questions 7-9)
- Part 4: Type of Programme (Questions 10-12)
- Part 5: Identify Successful Implementations of the Programme (Questions 13-20)
- Part 6: Identification of Other Programmes (Questions 21-22)
- Part 7: Closing

Part 1 should be collected before the interview. Part 2 should be collected before the interview but confirmed with the respondent.

Part 3 is probably the most essential part since it collects information that will make possible the characterisation of the programme in terms of involving on SMEs of high or low absorptive capacity. It is worth to emphasise here that the focus is not the design of the programme but its actual reality.

Part 4 is a desirable (but not essential) part since it tries to collect information on the types of participating partners and the range of services offered in the programme.

Part 5 is also an essential part since it tries to identify successful implementations of the programme from the SME point of view. In actual fact, the interview seeks information on three different areas:

- Questions 13-15 ask the respondent to name an example of a very successful implementation of the programme, providing the reasons that made it successful and (if possible) the contact details of the involved persons
- Questions 16-18 repeats the same process for a case of an SME of low absorptive capacity (in case that the previously covered one is not)
- Question 19-20 ask for an organisation that has repeated a successful implementation several times.

Finally Part 6 asks the assistance of the respondent to identify (other) programmes involving SMEs of low absorptive capacity.

Following a request from partners to develop a protocol for programme managers who only offer a short time for interaction, an Express version of the protocol was developed. The Express version contains only the essential parts of the survey, namely Section 3 and most of Section 5 (Annex II). A strong encouragement was given to the partners to use it only as a last resort.

4. Survey for Public-Private Partnership Programmes

4.1 Objectives

The intention is to contact the managers of programmes and have a semi-structured interview with them (ideally face-to-face or possibly over the phone). The survey on this side of the project will focus on the following areas:

- i. Build up our understanding of how these schemes operate
- ii. Understand the type of companies engaged in the programme;
- iii. The type of engagement of organisations from the public sector or the private sector;
- iv. The identification of successful projects of the programme and finally
- v. The referral to other public-private partnership programmes aiming at SMEs.

4.2 Development Methodology

Following some exploratory (desktop) research, a first understanding of the way these schemes operate was developed. A number of real PPP cases were identified and desktop research over the Internet has generated a small narrative for each case.

This understanding was articulated in a range of activities that public-private partnership deploy. In fact different sets of activities were recognised for programmes that involve SMEs of high absorptive capacity and those which involve SMEs of low absorptive capacity (see Deliverable 2.2).

This first set of identified activities were presented and discussed in the full consortium meeting as well as the Advisory Board. Useful feedback was received especially with defining the boundaries of these schemes and a special effort was taken to specify what programmes this model includes and what not.

The gained insights together with the feedback were then used by a specially dedicated team in the project to develop a questionnaire to be used with the programme managers of these schemes. A couple of the identified programmes, identified in the earlier research, are about to be used for piloting the questionnaire.

4.3 The PPP Survey Procedure

The survey for this strand of the project will follow a different strategy for selecting the potential targets for interview. In fact the selection of the programmes will follow

a much more random approach in terms of identifying PPP programmes. A special strategy was devised to identify PPP cases. Firstly, all partners were asked to identify schemes that fit the criteria of the project for PPP (Deliverable 2.2) for further consideration by the dedicated team. Secondly a number of announcements and messages were posted in the Linked-Inn (virtual) network asking for introductions or referrals to PPP schemes. Messages were posted to specifically targeted professionals as well as special groups like groups discussing knowledge and technology transfer. Thirdly a number of specialist networks and associations (such as the Knowledge Transfer Networks in UK) were contacted asking for introductions or referrals to PPP schemes.

This extensive dissemination campaign is expected to deliver interviews with at least 20 PPP cases in the immediate time and another 20 in the longer term. The introduction to these schemes will be more or less similar with the steps undertaken in the PSR strand in terms of introducing the project into potential interviewees (support letter from the Commission etc.).

The actual instrument (Annex IV) explores the following items:

- history of the programme (e.g. organisations involved, motivations)
- the decision-making process of the programme
- the process through which SME beneficiaries are selected
- the main services offered through the programme
- good and bad practice implementations of the programme
- the impact of the programme on the SMEs and the other stakeholders
- the future plans of the programme

As with the PSR programme managers, the respondent will be also asked to provide cases of other PPP programmes he/she is aware of.

This protocol provides also guidenotes for the interviewer.

5. List of annexes

ANNEX I: EXPERTS JUDGEMENT SURVEY GUIDE (FOR PSR PROGRAMMES)

ANNEX II: EXPERTS JUDGEMENT SURVEY GUIDE – EXPRESS VERSION (FOR PSR PROGRAMMES)

ANNEX III: FEEDBACK SHEET FOR CAPTURING EXPERIENCE OF PILOT INTERVIEWS

ANNEX IV: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS (FOR PPP PROGRAMMES)

*The actual tools (Deliverable Annexes) have been concealed as they are the Intellectual Property Right of the RAPPORT Consortium. If you need more information about the tools, please contact the co-ordinator of the programme
Dr George Tsekouras (g.tsekouras@brighton.ac.uk)*