

CERlecon – CE119

# ***eSmart-strategy for a transnational network of innovation ecosystems in CE regions***

Deliverable D.T1.4.1

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## 1. Project Summary & 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 T1** is the strategic starting and finishing point in tackling the common territorial challenges and lays the foundation for the change that CERlecon plans to achieve. It provides the smart strategies that will implement the new-type innovation ecosystems incorporating the six domains (*policy, finance, culture, supports, human capital and markets*) that need to interact for target-oriented SME training (D. Isenberg) in the project regions; **RIS3** is the policy domain. It also provides the strategy for the transnational network interlinking these ecosystems in the project area. T1 will produce two outputs to achieve Project Specific Objective 1.

Results: Output T1.1 - Regional Playparks: eSmart-strategies for regional innovation ecosystems in CE regions through two activities: (1) Concept Development of eSmart-strategies for regional ecosystems in CE regions, which will be tested and evaluated through pilots/activities in T2 & T3, leading to (2) Strategy Finalisation: eSmart-strategies for regional innovation ecosystems in CE regions. Throughout regional policy level stakeholders will be involved to ensure the viability / sustainability of the strategies and the Playparks after project lifetime. Output T1.2: Playparks network: eSmart-strategy for a transnational network of innovation ecosystems in CE regions through two activities: (1) Concept Development of an eSmart-strategy for a transnational network

of innovation ecosystems in CE regions, which will be tested and evaluated through pilots/activities in T2 & T3 leading to (2) Strategy Finalisation: eSmart-strategy for a transnational network of innovation ecosystems in CE regions. Throughout regional policy level stakeholders will be involved. Process-related communication will aim to engage the selected target groups (e.g. policy/support/SME/funding initiatives) as essential partners in output development.

Led by a strong and experienced regional authority (PP3), all project partners will be involved in all WP activities. The WP is logically the basis for the two following thematic WPs.

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#### **DELIVERABLE D. T1.4.1**

##### **eSmart-strategy for a trans. network of innovation ecosystems in CE regions**

In M6, based on the eConcept (D.T1.3.1) PP develop a working version of the strategy and after testing/evaluating in T2 & T3 finalise the eSmart-strategy for a trans. network of innovation ecosystems in CE regions in M35

This document is intended to draw the final picture of the **Transnational Network** concept and its strategy starting from the re-definition of the inputs initially defined on the *Deliverable D.T1.3.1 - eConcept for an eSmart-strategy for a trans. network of innovation ecosystems in CE regions*.

Whilst Chapter 3 reproduces the basic features expressed in D.T1.3.1 as tested and thus customized according to T2 and T3 activities, Chapter 4 (Planning for sustainability) tries to set the basic framework for the future action of the Transnational Network and thus its main rationale for sustainability.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> As indicated in the Application Form the **Playparks network** is one of the project core outputs being defined as: “Based on the initial eConcept, tested and evaluated through pilots/activities in T2 & T3, PP, working with policy level stakeholders, produce the eSmart strategy for a trans. network of innovation ecosystems in CE regions that focuses on links between the reg. Playparks and the overall transnational network: how they work together and how they complement each other and how the network can accelerate start-up growth and improve SME internationalisation”

## 2. The CERlecon outputs: shaping the Network

“The *regional innovation ecosystems* will provide regional entrepreneurs with ‘the right mix of financial and non-financial support’ to create their new firms and the **network** will provide them with a real European dimension for further development and even to their first business settlements.”<sup>2</sup>

“A transnational network interlinking the ecosystems will provide entrepreneurs with opportunities to increase their international skills in an international business environment.”<sup>3</sup>

The same definition of the Output<sup>4</sup> clearly set the fundamental synergy and connection between the Network and the single Playparks: “*The pilot action will demonstrate how the regional Playparks and the overall transnational network work together and complement each other to accelerate SME international growth and create new firms*”.

The following list of project concrete outputs is providing a first reference framework of the Network shape and functions first of all with reference to project activities and deliverables.

### **Output O.T1.1 - Regional Playparks: e-Smart-strategies for regional innovation ecosystems in CE regions**

Based on the initial e-Concepts, tested and evaluated through pilots/activities in T2 & T3, PP, working with policy level stakeholders, produce e-Smart strategies for new-type innovation ecosystems with the six domains (policy, finance, culture, supports, human capital, markets) that need to interact for target-oriented start-up/SME training (*D. Isenberg*).<sup>5</sup> RIS3 is the policy domain. The strategies will include new training methodology and synergies with funding initiatives to create new firms.

### **Output O.T1.2 - Playparks network: e-Smart-strategy for a transnational Network of innovation ecosystems in CE regions**

Based on the initial e-Concept, tested and evaluated through pilots/activities in T2 & T3, PP, working with policy level stakeholders, produce the e-Smart strategy for a transnational Network of innovation ecosystems in CE regions that focuses on links between the regional Playparks and the overall transnational network: how they work together and how they complement each other and how the network can accelerate start-up growth and improve SME internationalisation.

### **Output O.T2.1 - Regional Playparks: 7x regional pilot actions for innovation ecosystems implementation in PP regions**

In this output 7 regional innovation ecosystems (*Playparks*) will be implemented based on regional pilot actions and the e-Concepts (A.T1.1). The pilot actions will demonstrate how the six domains (policy,

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<sup>2</sup> As from the Application Form – Part C1 “Project relevance”

<sup>3</sup> As from the Application Form – Part C2 “Project focus”

<sup>4</sup> Output O.T2.2 “Playparks network”

<sup>5</sup> Isenberg, D ., The entrepreneurship ecosystem strategy as a new paradigm for economic policy: principles for cultivating entrepreneurship, Babson Entrepreneur- ship Ecosystem Project, Babson College, Babson Park, MA, 2011.

finance, culture, supports, human capital, markets) that need to interact for target-oriented start-up/SME training (*D. Isenberg*) will be incorporated at regional level. In all cases, RIS3 is the policy domain. They will also demonstrate how funding initiatives will be involved to create new firms.

#### **Output O.T2.2 - Playparks network: 1x transnational pilot action for innovation ecosystems network implementation**

In this output one transnational network of regional innovation ecosystems (*Playparks Network*) will be implemented based on a transnational pilot action and the e-Concept (A.T1.2). The pilot action will demonstrate how the regional Playparks and the overall transnational network work together and complement each other to accelerate SME international growth and create new firms.

#### **Output O.T2.3 – Playparks network: 1x Joint Playpark staff training**

Before work to improve the skills and competences of start-ups and young SMEs commences (T3), at least 21 regional Playpark staff (3+ *per Playpark*) take part in two-stage joint transnational trainings led by an external team of experts (initial training before work at the Playparks starts; augmented training after first Playparks cohort). E-Evaluations by Playpark staff and the training team will lead to the finalisation of the training methodology and materials.

#### **Output O.T2.4 - Playparks network: 1x Training methodology and materials e-Portfolio**

An essential element of staff training (O.T2.3) is the methodology and materials that are needed. Based on a mix of previous knowledge (e.g. i.e.SMART) and the specific new knowledge needed for staff at regional innovation ecosystems (not part of i.e.SMART), an e-Portfolio of methodologies and materials will be developed, tested, evaluated and finalised during staff training and made available to other CE regions on the online Playparks network platform (D.T2.4.1)

#### **Output O.T3.1 - Playparks network: 1x transnational business orientation e-Tool (*Playpark xChange*)**

In this output, PP with external support will develop and implement a transnational business orientation tool which will simulate a virtual stock exchange providing regional entrepreneurs / young SMEs with the opportunity to 'go public' with the economic and/or social innovation idea / product that they are developing at the regional Playpark. Through the 'real-life' transactions that will take place on the stock exchange, they will be able to adjust and improve their ideas / products for real market entry

#### **Output O.T3.2/3/4 - 1st/2nd/3rd cohort of start-ups / young SMEs training at regional Playparks and in the transnational Network**

**(3x)** 70+ start-ups / SMEs trained at the seven regional Playparks (10+ *per region*) and in the transnational network. Format: potential start-ups / young SMEs are inspired in regional Playpark idea generation laboratories; from these, the 10+ best per region are chosen for a 6-month improvement training. The chosen trainees' (equal female/male) business ideas (equal economic/social innovation) must focus on the national /regional RIS3. Synergies with funding initiatives will support these start-ups / SMEs becoming new firms.

### 3. The *Transnational Network* concept

#### I. The *Network* basic concept

“One strategy will implement new-type comprehensive innovation ecosystems, one in every project region. The second strategy will interlink these ecosystems in a transnational network. [...] A transnational network interlinking the ecosystems will provide entrepreneurs with opportunities to increase their international skills in an international business environment.”<sup>6</sup> “CERlecon will develop and implement smart strategies for regional innovation ecosystems interlinked in a transnational network (*‘a European entrepreneurial ecosystem’*) using RIS3 as the policy basis to advance economic and social innovation to create growth and jobs.”<sup>7</sup>

Following these basic definition as reported in the Application Form, the network has to be seen first of all as a ***transnational joint management unit***<sup>8</sup> to establish cooperation between the regional Playparks of the project regions (Vienna, Veneto, Stuttgart, Bratislava, Rijeka, Brno and Krakow) having the following basic functions:

- to encourage and support the transnational transfer and synergy of excellent business ideas for both start-ups and newly created businesses;
- to organise a two-stage joint transnational trainings for Playparks’ staff led by an external team of experts (*initial training before work at the Playparks starts and augmented training after first Playparks cohort*);
- to support the organisation and implementation of the 3 cohorts of start-ups / young SMEs training at the regional Playparks and in the joint training session;
- to master the *e-Portfolio of methodologies and materials* which will be developed, tested, evaluated and finalised during staff training and made available to other CE regions on the online Playparks network platform;
- to host contents, materials and tools implemented and used in each single regional Playpark;
- to support and ‘host’ the implementation of *online transnational ecosystems network platform*, including the *business orientation e-Tool*;<sup>9</sup>



<sup>6</sup> As from the Application Form – Part C2 “Project focus”

<sup>7</sup> As from the Application Form – Part C3 “Project context”

<sup>8</sup> The term ‘structure’ could be misleading bringing the idea of some ‘physical environment’ and complicated organisation.

<sup>9</sup> Deliverable **D.T3.1.2 - Development and implementation of the e-Tool** – “The e-Tool is developed and is part of the initial joint transnational training of Playpark staff (D.T2.5.2) to familiarise staff with its use/potential. It will be then used for improvement trainings at regional Playparks and in the network”.

- to provide networking opportunities for Playpark trainers, regional experts, consultants and mentors aiming at support and bring entrepreneurs from transnational arena together.

Based on the concrete experiences gained in the project operational activities, as in particular *Activity A.T2.3 - Development of Pilot action template including links between regional Playparks and the trans. Network*, *Activity A.T2.4 - Trans. Pilot Action tailored to and implemented in the project area*, *Activities A.T2.5+6 - Trainings: joint transnational trainings of Playpark staff from regional innovation ecosystems* and especially the **3 Cohorts** of start-ups/young SMEs training, the basic functions set in the initial framework have been tested, exploited and even integrated with other background features evidenced as follows:<sup>10</sup>

- the transnational exchange of ideas and matchmaking for start-ups which are allowed to develop in international environment of Central European start-ups community from the early stage of their business development – this was achieved mainly through the real visits in other regions in form “Playparks exchanges”;
- the transnational transfer of knowledge, competences and methods thanks to two stage of joint transnational trainings “train the trainers” for projects partners and Playparks employees;
- the mastering of the e-Portfolio of methodologies and materials;<sup>11</sup>
- the establishing of a kind of self-support groups in the form of the 3 cohorts of start-ups which helped each other, exchanged their experiences and problems and often joined their forces in their first steps in the world of business (like people with expertise in IT specialist helped those with artistic background and interesting projects or with social innovations);
- establishing a kind of mentoring between start-ups from earlier cohorts to those from later cohorts;
- in Poland, the development of bonds between start-ups and Krakow Chamber of Commerce and Industry which enables fresh entrepreneurs use services of other Chamber’s project as well as opportunities which Chamber core activity offers to SMEs - this will be another factor which will enable CERlecon beneficiaries to use fully benefits of business networking and collective activities of entrepreneurial circles;
- creating international ecosystem network with numbers of regional stakeholders recruited in all 7 regions where regional authorities, regional financing institutions with seed funds and universities were involved in the project;
- initiating cooperation of start-ups with *third sector institutions* such as associations with experience in work for the benefits of local communities, regional and wider society which certainly inspire and enhance development of all their social innovations and ideas;

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**Output O.T3.1 - 1x transnational business orientation e-Tool (Playpark xChange)** – “PP with external support will develop and implement a trans. business orientation tool which will simulate a virtual stock exchange providing regional entrepreneurs / young SMEs with the opportunity to ‘go public’ with the economic and/or social innovation idea/product that they are developing at the regional Playpark. Through the ‘real-life’ transactions that will take place on the stock exchange, they will be able to adjust and improve their ideas/products for real market entry”.

<sup>10</sup> What follows is a summary of the different inputs provided by all the 7 regional Playparks according to their experience on the field.

<sup>11</sup> E.g. PP14 contributed by reviewing materials prepared by other partners and by elaborating a guide How to build up a Start-up in Malopolska.

- in a way involving start-ups in revitalisation of a district which was neglected and has huge potential which especially had place on a level of social revival and integration and building district's positive, attractive for young people image;<sup>12</sup>
- the *Peer-to-Peer Learning* sessions as well as the *One-on-One Coaching* during the six-month training and mentoring program;
- to encourage and support the transnational transfer and synergy of excellent business ideas for both start-ups and newly created businesses and to support the organisation and implementation of the 3 cohorts of start-ups / young SMEs training at the regional Playparks and in the joint training sessions;
- to support and 'host' the implementation of *online transnational ecosystems network platform*, including the business orientation e-Tool – this feature was materialised through RIS3 app and Exchange tool;
- the general networking opportunities for Playpark trainers, regional experts, consultants and mentors which have been provided in order to support and bring entrepreneurs from transnational arena all together;
- the close cooperation with other regional start-up facilities, e.g. site visits, open workshops, participation at pitches etc. as well as the opening of the Playpark for external events and delegations.

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<sup>12</sup> This has been particularly true in the case of Playpark Vienna and Krakow.

## II. The *Network* additional operations and functions

In addition to the basic functions as set on the Application Form, the partners have agreed on the following additional operation and functions (referred also to the supervision / support to each single Playpark):

- each single Playpark has to define the contact / responsible person assuring the continuous connection to the Network;
- 7 mailboxes directly referred to the project (*one for each region*) will be activated to provide each Playpark with a formal and direct contact;
- all the Playparks should also start using the CERlecon social media tools to attract emerging entrepreneurs and newly created SMEs, as well as to communicate & disseminate with relevant stakeholders;
- all the Playparks should start using multimedia social networking tools (such as Skype, Google hang-out, etc.) for a more effective connection with the network;
- the *online Playparks network platform* is going to serve as a “virtual Playpark” which will be a common online environment and a basic tool for the network. It will support the interaction with and between trainers and peers via the online platform.

Ultimately the Network has represented the proper “environment” effectively enabling each single Playpark to concretely “provide entrepreneurs with opportunities to increase their international skills in an international business environment”. Thanks to the web and its potentialities and exploiting the Network, each Playpark potential has been exploited as “a real gate to fly all over the world to also catch-up ideas and experiences”. Each regional structure has thus operated as an “open door” location where young generations and newly entrepreneurs have the possibility to take profit of virtual / real experiences supported by a well trained staff and a fully equipped environment.

In concrete the 7 Playparks have exploited the Network potential by letting their business ideas, business projects and young SMEs take profit of the following transnational opportunity:<sup>13</sup>

- in Poland contact with other Playparks were established and maintained by people responsible for Playpark Krakow (manager and employees from *Association B1* which hosted and run daily the Krakow Playpark);
- project mailbox [ceriecon@jph.krakow.pl](mailto:ceriecon@jph.krakow.pl) were established and later also mailboxes of *Association B1* and address of Playpark manager in the Municipality of Krakow were used as a basic contact for Krakow Playpark;
- 3 outgoing Playpark Exchanges were realised (*one for each cohort*);
- CERIEcon Facebook as well as *Association B1* Facebook were used to share Krakow Playpark experiences such as exchanges, training impressions etc.;

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<sup>13</sup> Again, the list here reports Playparks’ feedbacks according to their experience on the field and their direct perception in implementing the activities.

- the project platform <https://pro4edu.net/cms/index.php/en/> were promoted among regional stakeholders to disseminate the project results (such as training materials and methodology among Polish Enterprise Europe Network partners) and project achievements (i.e. reports from successful events like link photo reports from Vienna final were sent to Malopolskas regional stakeholders);
- deeper insight into SME's and start-ups' work in a transnational context;
- bilateral and multilateral exchange opportunities while study visits as well as presenting and discussing the own SME/start-up concept with other entrepreneurs in a transnational context and the participating to a transnational competition;
- visiting regional SME's who have already several years' market experience and the insight into different RIS3 strategies;
- networking possibility with other entrepreneurs from other countries;
- social media tools such as facebook campaigns and sharing of CERlecon promotional videos were used to attract participants to cohorts and to communicate & disseminate project results with relevant stakeholders;
- Messenger chat groups and WhatsApp were used extensively in the communication among Playparkees from different cohorts and during the Exchanges;
- the *online Playparks network platform* and RIS3 app were used to communicate news and ideas of Playparkees and support interaction between peers;
- contacts between Playparkees and stakeholders from different regions were established – particular success stories include business mentoring and cooperation between Brno – Bratislava Playparkees and stakeholders/trainers/Playpark staff;
- CERlecon Playpark Rijeka official Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/PlayparkRijeka/> provides all up-to-date news and information about recent activities in the regional Playpark that can be easily followed by everyone within and outside the Network (teams, Playpark Managers, regional staff, potential cohort participants, SMEs, investors etc.);
- Playpark Rijeka use *Viber* application as a social networking tool to communicate and connect with all the regional participants, especially during exchange week programmes but also regularly with local teams during the cohort training programme;
- Direct email address of Playpark Rijeka [ceriecon@uniri.hr](mailto:ceriecon@uniri.hr) is available to everyone seeking further information regarding programme activities as well as main email for programme participants when seeking consultation hours, mentoring support and all the other information;
- Playpark Manager, Playpark Coordinator, mentors and staff were available to programme participants at any point via email, phone or in person to create continuous cooperation and to easily track the mutual work progress together;
- The playpark managers and project partners had to keep in touch throughout the whole project duration, mainly to discuss organisational and content matters and exchange ideas on how to run a Playpark and how to support the start-ups in the best possible way.

## 4. Planning for sustainability

“A project is sustainable when it continues to deliver benefits to the project beneficiaries and/or other constituencies for an extended period after the Commission’s financial assistance has been terminated”.<sup>14</sup>

From the outset, CERlecon has planned for the lasting durability of the WP outputs after project lifetime through the institutional sustainability of the partnership architecture. The partnership involves two partner institutions (*political / expert*) per region that are committed to the durability of the strategy and action plans that will be produced. The political partner is a regional / municipal institution and together with the expert partner will have full ownership of the outputs.<sup>15</sup>

The regional Playparks and the Playparks network, the main outputs of this WP, has been conceived to be not only **institutionally** (cf. T1) but also **financially sustainable** since the regional PP consortium are the owners. In other words, the infrastructure, and the main functions will be carried by one or by both partners, also after project lifetime. This was clarified in preliminary meetings and also ensured by regional Letters of Commitment during project lifetime (cf. Del. T2.2.1).<sup>16</sup>

After institutional and financial sustainability (WPT1 / WPT2), the **political sustainability** has been a matter of WPT3. The regional political partners will use the outputs to improve their capacities for skills development and their existing policies for entrepreneurial training / support with RIS3 as the basis.<sup>17</sup>

During the project implementation the Playpark network management structure has been thought to be very light and easy where the **Management Board** has been represented by the project Steering Committee members and each Playpark responsible has given form to the **Operational Board**. All the project related tools and resources have been then displayed to support each single Playpark action and the whole network operation. The same very basic and light structure will be maintained after the end of the project to give also a formal continuity exploiting even the ‘personal’ relations created during the project lifetime.

In any case the basic concept has been defined flexible enough to leave each single partner being free to adopt a tailor-made local strategy to ensure a more “visible” and strong future sustainability

<sup>14</sup> *Handbook on Sustainability* - European Commission Directorate-General Education and Culture - © European Communities, 2006.

<sup>15</sup> Sustainability and transferability of work package outputs – **WP T1**

<sup>16</sup> Sustainability and transferability of work package outputs – **WP T2** - As in details for Deliverable **D.T2.2.1** “*Letters of commitment for the sustainability of regional Playparks and the Playparks network*”, intended as the regional partners document their commitment to sustain (institutionally, financially, politically) their regional Playparks and the network during and after project lifetime.

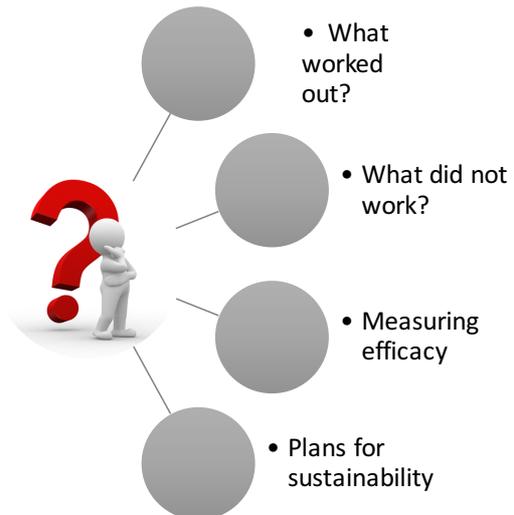
<sup>17</sup> Sustainability and transferability of work package outputs – **WP T3**

of its Playpark deciding, for instance, for the inclusion on local incubators, municipal offices, universities, NGOs and so on.<sup>18</sup>

As a result then of the application and implementation of the initial *eConcept* drafted according to the project assumptions during the pilot action performed in T2 and T3, the Transnational Network future sustainability is tracked out of a set of practical conclusions summarised as follows:<sup>19</sup>

### WHAT WORKED OUT AT BEST?

- Cooperation and exchange of experience and knowledge between start-ups inside cohorts. We also observed improving activities from one cohort to the next e.g. realisation of Playpark exchange was systematically improved and the best in 3rd cohort;
- There are several successful milestones the transnational Network realized (eg. Playparks visits during the transnational ExChange weeks, transnational Finals of social and economic business ideas, etc.). There is maybe one 'highlight' among the realized project activities; and this is the cooperation, collaboration and co-creation of the methodology and training materials for both target groups (2x joint staff trainings, 7x regional implementation for start-ups/young SMEs). The Playparks Network managed to produce a methodology that is suitable for all 7 regions, tailored for both social and economic business ideas;
- Playpark Exchanges and Playpark Finals in each of the 3 cohorts proved to be a really nice and effective idea on how to get Playparkees and stakeholders from different cohorts to showcase their ideas, interact with each other and develop possible cooperation;
- Participating at other transnational events within the network such as opening of Playpark Vienna or regional finals in Playpark Brno were also great networking opportunities and source of inspiration for operation of Playpark Bratislava. In addition the two staff trainings were very helpful for the designing process of the structure of the 6-months cohorts;
- Successful exchange programmes connected participants from different regional Playparks creating friendships and connections while strengthening the regional staff cooperation and communication even more. Playpark Rijeka facebook page increased visibility of the training programme in social media and helped us to create the audience not only on regional level but within the Network as well;
- The exchange weeks and finals events worked out very well. The start-ups got easily in touch, got along very well with each other, shared their business ideas and exchanged ideas and experiences. Some of them will certainly keep in touch after the project lifetime and will follow each other's business and private developments.



<sup>18</sup> As also provided in Deliverable D.T1.2.8 "PP final e-Concepts how to involve regional stakeholders (policy level) in CE regions"

<sup>19</sup> Also this time to better stress each single Playpark inputs towards future sustainability the various feedbacks collected are here reported and listed, even the ones that are contradicting each other to better underline all the single perceptions.

## WHAT DID NOT WORKED AT ALL?

- The RIS3 APP – it wasn't popular among the Krakow Playparkees which was partly due to the fact that they weren't as interested in establishing branches of their business in other CE regions from the very beginnings as authors of the project assumed so they weren't much interested in smart specialisations of other project regions. As for communication with other Playparks participants preferred traditional integration during exchanges with travels and visiting the real Playparks. As a consequence only a few beneficiaries have registered and used RIS3 APP;
- Playpark xChange Tool haven't met with the preferences of the Krakow's Playparkees so they haven't participated in the contests which were organised with the use of the Tool. This might have been result of the fact that the contests days usually took place during Krakow Playpark's real exchanges abroad. However, another reason of this may be also focusing ambition of the Krakow Playparkees on winning place in the finals thanks to their pitching abilities in which they were trained by the specialist in communication and by an actor;
- More men than women participated in Playpark trainings in Krakow. Such a result is an effect of the fact that we didn't want to refuse nobody, and more men than women applied to us;
- The Playparks' Network achieved everything that was foreseen in the Application Form. Only the involvement and engagement of stakeholders on a transnational level could have been more strengthened. Embedded into the Steering Committee Meetings, there were in total six transnational stakeholders meetings successfully organised. Their transnational involvement was limited in these meetings, some of them participated on the Finals, and some of them joined the Playpark ExChange visits, but a more continuous involvement could have contribute the start-ups/young SMEs work;
- During its usage the Exchange tool showed some flaws and would need refinement so it could be used to its full capacity. However, as there were also problems to engage Playparkees to use the tool there is also a question, whether or not to keep it in the training program for the future. On the other hand, we considered RIS3 APP as a useful tool for real materialisation of the virtual network where the Playparkees, Playpark staff and stakeholders may gain knowledge about the project, Playparks, business ideas and more in a modern and interactive way. Yet again, it hasn't fully reached its potential as majority of Playparks didn't kept it updated;
- Attracting participants to participate on Playpark Exchanges proved to be a difficult task in particular for the 3rd cohort for Playpark Bratislava. This issue could be addressed if the duration of Exchange would be shortened as most of the Playparkees couldn't participate for 5 days because of the work/school duties.

## RESULTS ACHIEVED SO FAR

- In Krakow 36 start-ups trained together in 3 cohorts with both social and business projects, including enterprises already established while joining the project and enterprises established during the cohort programs and after it. Cooperation with 6 other Playparks has been well developed which includes involving the whole regional ecosystem in transnational network including stakeholders supporting the

Krakow Playpark and Regional Policy Stakeholders representing regional authorities (the Marshal Office) whose representatives took part in 4 project meetings;<sup>20</sup>

- All related activities and results that was foreseen in the Application Form related to the transnational Network were successfully achieved. All project partners signed the Letters of Commitment respective the sustainability of the regional Playparks after project lifetime. As a consequence of the fruitful transnational cooperation, and to ensure the continuity and further development of the common achievements, other transnational projects have been submitted, and successfully approved (eg. under Interreg Central Europe – CE1494 IN SITU);
- As mentioned above, particular success stories of transnational network include business mentoring and cooperation between Brno – Bratislava Playparkees and stakeholders/trainers/Playpark staff;
- Project was supported by the Playpark network management structure and implemented successfully on the regional level leaving us with interested individuals and potential participants for future training cohort programmes;
- The main achievements @ the Stuttgart Playpark: 25 founders from Croatia, Poland and Czech Republic in Stuttgart within Exchange weeks - 30 founders from Stuttgart in Italy, Austria and Slovakia within Exchange weeks - 7 founders from Stuttgart in 3 Finals.

#### PLAN SET FOR THE TRANSNATIONAL NETWORK SUSTAINABILITY

- During CERlecon realization an intensive cooperation and strong bonds were established by the Krakow Playpark and Krakow's project partners with 6 other Playparks and 10 project partners from Vienna, Stuttgart, Brno, Bratislava, Rijeka and Veneto which creates excellent basis for the Transnational Network sustainability;
- All seven regional Playparks and all project partners committed themselves to sustain the Playpark activities by e.g.: encouraging and supporting the transnational transfer and synergy of excellent business ideas for both start-ups and newly created businesses, cooperating and sharing the know-how regarding support to start-ups and scale ups, and enabling further transnational learning and ExChange visits with other CERlecon regions;
- Transnational network is a part of Playpark Bratislava and as such we plan to sustain it through the programs and services of the Slovak Business Agency such as accelerator, growth and incubator programs where we will share knowledge with the colleagues and use developed training materials, curricula and experience from running the Playpark program and also offer them the transnational network with its contacts, tools and established infrastructure. There are discussions at the moment

<sup>20</sup> Details on Polish results:

Training in Krakow has 36 startups. Apart from Poles, Hungarians, Ukrainians and Belarusians also took part in them. In total, 74 people participated in the classes, including 51 men and 22 women.

18 startups operated in the category of social innovations and 18 in the business category. However, it should be noted that sometimes these categories were not sharp and some startups can be classified as both business and social activities. 14 startups develop their promos and products, 7 more are at the initial stage of development. Not always the result of training in the playpark was the implementation of the initial idea. Sometimes, thanks to meetings at Playpark Kraków, startups changed the concept of operation.

We also assumed that success could be not only the creation of a company, but also the stopping a person or a group of people from creation of a company that would not have a chance on the market.

What is important, we tried to build out of CERlecon Playpark participants a community the that was permanently connected with the place and project. Part of it succeeded here and some startups from the first and second cohorts took part in the events of the later cohorts. Some startups participate in the current works of Playpark, or organize other events at the Playpark and Centrum B7 (Association B1).

on the follow-up international project that would, in particular, help to sustain the international dimension embodied by the transnational network;

- Playpark Rijeka plans to continue with the training programmes after the project lifetime, by providing pre-incubation concept and start-up support through workshops, mentoring and consultation hours to teams and individuals with ideas and young SMEs, while staying open for further cooperation with other regional Playparks in order to bring the best transnational experience and knowledge exchange to local start-ups;
- It is certainly challenging to ensure the sustainability of the transnational network. However as the project partners themselves are going to keep in touch, not only due to the follow-up project InSitu, it is easy to re-connect start-ups again if need be. Also, as mentioned above, some of the start-ups will certainly keep in touch on a more private basis but will ensure this way a future connection between start-ups in the seven CERlecon regions. All social media channels and the web platform will be kept up to provide the communication basis.



<http://tinyurl.com/CERlecon>

[www.interreg-central.eu/CERlecon](http://www.interreg-central.eu/CERlecon)

