

GCS “CROSSBORDER CLUSTER STIMULATION”

The second project, GCS “Cross-border Cluster Stimulation”, is a continuation of the work of the TTC, being also co-financed by the INTERREG programme.

This project consists of an innovation fund, amounting to €4.7 million, which is aimed at cross-border innovation projects between technology sector SMEs.

Grants range from €100,000 to €250,000 per project and are likewise not repayable, provided the beneficiaries have own funds equal to the amount of the grant. Three calls for proposals have been issued and 22 cross-border R&D projects selected, with a total of €13.2 million invested. Selection of the consortia has been made by a group of experts, based on a number of criteria: sector (cutting edge technologies), the innovative nature of the proposal, the market outlook, the international dimension of the businesses’ activities and the proportion of self-financing of the project. Some 80% of the projects co-financed by the GCS innovation fund had been initiated by the TTC project. In addition, many more ideas for innovative cooperation have been generated and launched without European financing.

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WHAT PLANS FOR THE FUTURE?

For the 2014-2020 programme period, the partners are working on drawing up a Sustainable Innovation Programme. This programme will focus both on making links between players from research and business (S2B – Science to Business) and on relationships between economic players themselves (B2B – Business to Business). The S2B component aims to develop the transfer of technologies to businesses through a voucher system, a fund inspired by the Sciences Offensive project (Offensive Sciences, financed by the 2007-2013 Upper Rhine programme) and capitalisation activities. The B2B component, for its part, is focused solely on the pre-competitive phase, in order to comply with the regime governing state aid. It will include the creation of an Open Innovation Cluster similar to the TTC project, an Open Innovation Fund similar to the GCS project, and an Open Innovation Loan.

TO WHAT EXTENT CAN THIS GOOD PRACTICE BE ADOPTED IN OTHER CROSS-BORDER TERRITORIES?

Financial support to SMEs is a highly problematic issue for cross-border cooperation programmes, with the extremely strict regulation of state aid (de minimis) greatly reducing the scope for businesses to receive European funds. The TTC and GCS projects nevertheless make it possible to comply with the rules concerning state aid.

These two initiatives also make it possible to better coordinate the sometimes divergent life cycles of businesses and European programmes. Initially intended as a sole project, the partners in the end opted for two projects in order to adapt to the timeframe of innovative projects. The TTC gets involved at the initial research stage, while the GCS supports the realisation and development of new products.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

<http://www.ttc-innovation.eu/>
<http://www.gcs-innovation.eu/fr-be/gcs-homepage-2.aspx>

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