

# **LOCAL-LEVEL COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY OF**

## **DEX INNOVATION CENTRE**

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June 2017

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. OVERVIEW.....	5
2. INTRODUCTION .....	7
3. METHODS AND SOURCE OF DATA USED DURING SITUATION ASSESSMENT .....	8
3.1 Literature, document and website analysis .....	8
3.2 Desk research of existing statistical data .....	8
3.3 Qualitative data collection.....	8
3.4 Quantitative data collection.....	9
4. REGIONAL AND LOCAL-LEVEL CONTEXT.....	10
4.1. Demographic study of the youth.....	10
4.2. Study of innovatory capacities of the area.....	12
4.2.1 DEX Innovation Centre .....	12
4.2.2 Technical University of Liberec .....	12
4.2.3 LOS – Liberecká občanská společnost (Liberec Civic Society).....	12
4.3. Introduction of economic operators of the region .....	13
4.3.1 CzechInvest .....	13
4.3.2 Regional Chamber of Commerce .....	13
4.4 Introduction of the system of council and state institutions.....	14
4.4.1 Liberec region office .....	14
4.4.2 Municipality of Liberec.....	14
4.5. Introduction of financial incentive function of councils, analysis of services.....	15
4.6 Introduction of services in the fields of knowledge-sharing and knowledge management .....	15

4.6.1. KultiVAR .....	15
4.6.2 CML.....	15
4.7. Examination of collaboration of existing services, their potential for improvement.....	16
5. IDENTIFICATION OF RELEVANT POLICIES AND LEGISLATION .....	16
5.1 General overview of the policy instrument.....	16
5.2 Strengths and weaknesses of the policy instrument.....	17
5.3 Influence of policy instrument.....	17
6. GOOD PRACTISES .....	18
6.1 Student Business Club of Technical University of Liberec.....	18
6.1.1 Background of the good practice example .....	18
6.1.2 Implementation of the good practice example.....	19
6.1.3 Transferability and lesson learned.....	20
6.2 KultiVAR.....	21
6.2.1 Background of the good practice example .....	21
6.2.2 Implementation of the good practice example.....	22
6.2.3 Transferability and lesson learned.....	23
6.3 EDUCA MY JOB.....	24
6.3.1 Background of the good practice example .....	24
6.3.2 Implementation of the good practice example.....	25
6.3.3 Transferability and lesson learned.....	26
7. BAD PRACTISES.....	27
7.1 Co-workingový motor Liberec (Liberec Co-working Engine) .....	27

8. CONCLUSION .....28

## 1. OVERVIEW

<b>Country:</b>	Czech Republic
<b>Name of the organization:</b>	DEX Innovation Centre
<b>Topic:</b>	State-of-art of Innovation Ecosystem in Liberec Region
<b>Duration of the project:</b>	1/2017 – 6/2019
<b>Funding program:</b>	Interreg Danube Transnational Programme
<b>Reference No.</b>	DTP1- 1- 415- 1.2
<b>Total budget:</b>	2,121,179.78 EUR

### Key partners:

LP: Local Government and Municipality of District 11 of Budapest, Újbuda

PP1: PRIZMA Foundation for the improvement of employment possibilities, the institution

PP2: Municipality of Maribor

PP3: NOWA Training Counselling Project management

PP4: akzente - Center for equality and regional cooperation

PP5: Intercommunity Development Association Cluj Metropolitan Area

PP6: Sofia Development Association

PP7: Sofia Municipality

PP8: DEX Innovation Centre

PP9: Institute Mihajlo Pupin

PP10: Municipality of Savski Venac

PP11: Corvinus University of Budapest Small Business Development Centre

PP12: City of Graz

PP13: City of Belgrade

PP14: North-West Regional Development Agency

**Current status:**

The project was launched in January earlier this year and at the moment it is on the right path of the successful implementation. All activities planned for the first project period are being elaborated by project partners under the supervision of the Lead partner. The current progress will be mapped during the international meeting in Liberec, the Czech Republic, at the end of June 2017. Tasks and deliverables for upcoming project periods will be assigned to partners during the meeting in order to ensure the project will stay on track.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of this case-study is to map the local environment with respect to the youth entrepreneurship and innovations.

Historically, the Liberec region is a home to large international corporations mostly operating in the automotive supply-chain industry. These companies are the biggest regional employers. The entrepreneurship spirit and culture are not widely represented in the region and can be found only on the individual level.

This is also reflected in the policies and instruments defined by the public administration. Until now, they were primarily oriented on the key industry players and partly disregarded the needs of other beneficiaries, in our case young entrepreneurs. Fortunately, the situation is about to change as the Liberec region office expressed their interest in opening the Innovation Center – Business Incubator recently. It is the very first initiative in the field of youth entrepreneurship in the Liberec region and hopefully, it will become a pioneer in this area.

Apart from that, the regional innovation environment focused on young entrepreneurs is very fragmented with many activities being conducted separately with no synergic effects. This is where the local comparative case-study comes into play. Unfortunately, the number of actors and therefore the number of activities is quite limited in our region as the innovation ecosystem is not fully developed yet.

Different research methods and techniques were used when preparing this case study. These include the comprehensive desk research (mostly online websites, official publications), statistical data analysis (Czech Statistical Office), interviews with local ecosystem stakeholders (bilateral and multilateral), and qualitative data collection.

As the core of this study, three regional best case practices were identified and described in detail. They can be found in Chapter 6. Ultimately, the one example of the bad practice was introduced in Chapter 7. The main findings of the study are summarized in the last chapter.

## 3. METHODS AND SOURCE OF DATA USED DURING SITUATION ASSESSMENT

### 3.1 Literature, document and website analysis

The most information required for the purpose of this study is available online. We frequently visited official websites of the Liberec region office and the Municipality of Liberec. All strategic documents, including official publications, are available there.

The website analysis is also a great tool for finding the relevant information about the key regional stakeholders and their activities.

### 3.2 Desk research of existing statistical data

During the research, we found out that there is not much of relevant data collected directly within the region. The Liberec region office often uses external sources of data rather than collecting their own.

For purposes of this study, we will use the same external source of data as the Liberec region office uses, i.e. the Czech Statistical Office. However, as the Czech Statistical Office is based in Prague and manages statistics primarily on the national level, therefore there are not so many details available in particular regional statistics.

### 3.3 Qualitative data collection

A series of interviews were conducted on both bilateral and multilateral basis. Representatives of public administration, intermediary organizations, business supporting actors, academia, non-profit and non-government organizations, SMEs, young innovators, and civil society took part in these interviews. Some of these interviews were conducted through the focus group platform. The quadruple-helix approach was chosen as a relevant tool for the selection of interviewees.



On top of that, the Liberec region office organizes the key stakeholders meeting at the end of June, where the new regional Innovation Center- Business Incubator matters will be discussed. Our organization, DEX Innovation Centre, was invited to participate in the event and to express our opinion. This shows the respected position of our organization in the regional innovation ecosystem.

### 3.4 Quantitative data collection

As the Liberec region is one of the smallest regions in the Czech Republic, the innovation environment is only at the beginning, and because there are not so many active actors in the regional innovation ecosystem, we have decided to collect the relevant information directly via the comprehensive and detailed interviews in person with the representatives of specific target group as described in the previous section.

## 4. REGIONAL AND LOCAL-LEVEL CONTEXT

### 4.1. Demographic study of the youth

Based on the latest available statistics collected by the Czech Statistical Office, there were almost 440 thousand people living in the Liberec region (mid-year population) in 2015. Out of those, there were 74 thousand persons in total in the age group 15-29 in the Liberec region. The detailed breakdown can be found in the Table 1. The primary target group of our project therefore makes up to 17 per cent of the total population of the Liberec region.

Age	2015
15-19	20 275
20-24	25 007
25-29	28 574
<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>73 856</i>

Table 1. Distribution of the population by age in the Liberec region as at December 31

The next table provides a detailed overview of our target group with respect to the employment. The general employment rate of our target group as defined by the International Labor Organization is 50.1 per cent. The labor force, in other words the economically active population, makes up almost 41 thousand persons. Out of these, 37 thousand people are employed and only 3 thousand people are unemployed. The remaining 34 thousand persons are economically inactive. This is mostly caused by the fact they are still high school or university students.

Category	2015
Population 15-29	74.5
Labor force 15-29	40.8

Employed in the national economy 15-29	37.4
Unemployed 15-29	3.4
Economically inactive 15-29	33.8

Table 2. Thousand persons. Employment status of the population by age according to LFSS in the Liberec region.

The last table describes the youth with respect to the higher education. There is only one university in the Liberec region, which is the Technical University of Liberec. The two subsection bellows shows us the number of students in the specific field of education. The total number of university students then implies, that 15 per cent of our target group are university students, which is quite outstanding number.

Category	2015
University students, total	10 041
Field of education: <i>Natural sciences, mathematics and computing</i>	1 361
Field of education: <i>Natural sciences, mathematics and computing</i>	1 746

Table 3. Selected data on science and research in the Liberec region.

## 4.2. Study of innovatory capacities of the area

### 4.2.1 DEX Innovation Centre

Our organization is one of the most active in the field of innovation in the Liberec region. Currently, we are implementing two regional projects aiming at young entrepreneurs, specifically the New Generation Skills and the Accelerator. We closely cooperate with the Liberec region office.

Apart from that, each year we organize the Startup Europe Week conference also in cooperation with the Liberec region office. This conference deals with the youth entrepreneurship issues in our region and explores further options of improving the current situation.

### 4.2.2 Technical University of Liberec

Recently, the Technical University of Liberec launched its new project called Student Business Club. It is an initiative which supports young entrepreneurs towards their successful ventures. We have identified this initiative as one of the good practice examples, thus detailed information can be found in the next part of the document.

### 4.2.3 LOS – Liberecká občanská společnost (Liberec Civic Society)

LOS is a non-government non-profit organization founded in Liberec in 2003. Its main goal is the personal and societal development of young people on the regional and international level through the informal education. LOS organizes workshops, seminars, conferences, exhibitions, and other events in cooperation with the Liberec region office and the Municipality of Liberec.

## 4.3. Introduction of economic operators of the region

### 4.3.1 CzechInvest

Business and Investment Development Agency CzechInvest is an agency of the Ministry of Industry and Trade. Established in 1992, the agency contributes to attracting foreign investment and developing domestic companies through its services and development programs. CzechInvest also promotes the Czech Republic abroad and acts as an intermediary between the EU and small and medium-sized enterprises in implementing structural funds in the Czech Republic. The main objective of CzechInvest is to advise and support existing and new entrepreneurs and foreign investors in the Czech Republic.

CzechInvest has a network of offices in each region of the Czech Republic. One of these offices is located right in Liberec and this office is responsible for all CzechInvest operations in the region.

Their latest initiative is called “Czech Startups” and is focused on young entrepreneurs at different stages of the investment cycle. It provides a variety of support including financial incentives, mentoring services, trips to globally recognized accelerator programs in New York or Singapore and other useful features.

### 4.3.2 Regional Chamber of Commerce

Its mission is to create opportunities for business, push through and support measures aiming at the further development of business in the Czech Republic and at strengthening the economic stability of the country.

Through its network, the Czech Chamber of Commerce provides support to businesses in all regions of the Czech Republic. This mainly concerns consulting services and assistance in matters related to business activities, the issue of verified printouts from selected registers of the public administration, activities aiming at education and development of human resources, support in accessing foreign markets, etc.

Although it is declared as one of the top priorities of the Liberec Chamber of Commerce, the business support for young entrepreneurs is not remarkable. The Chamber rather closely

cooperates with the regional members, who are often well-known and long-established regional companies with the national or international importance.

This is the deficit area which definitely needs improvement.

## 4.4 Introduction of the system of council and state institutions

### 4.4.1 Liberec region office

The Liberec region office has not been very active recently in the field of innovations and youth entrepreneurship support. However, this is about to change as the new game-changing project was announced – the regional Innovation Center – Business Incubator. Before the actual project launch, the Liberec region office started coordinating activities of innovation ecosystem actors in order to maximize synergic effects of these activities. This is a completely new role for the office as they have no previous relevant experience. However, it demonstrates their commitment to becoming the regional innovation ecosystem leader or coordinator.

### 4.4.2 Municipality of Liberec

There is a very complicated political situation at the Liberec city hall. The situation was not ideal for last couple years, however, things escalated quickly recently. The opposition overthrew the ruling coalition a few months ago and since then there is nobody in charge of the city. All factual discussion and alternatives are blocked by one of two political parties with strong mandates. The representatives of each party cannot stand representatives of the second party and vice-versa. All strategic decisions on the city level are either stopped or blocked.

Before this regrettable situation at the city hall, there were a number of projects prepared to be launched in the area of innovation and young entrepreneurship. This, for example, includes the Liberec Technopark, city FabLab concept, city workshop center and others.

This is one of the reasons, why the New Generation Skills project is implemented in cooperation with the Liberec region office rather than with the city hall.

## **4.5. Introduction of financial incentive function of councils, analysis of services**

Currently, neither the Liberec region office nor the Municipality of Liberec offers any financial incentives for young entrepreneurs.

The only state institution offering some sort of financial incentive is the regional Job Center, which offers a small subsidy for long-term unemployed applicants. However, long-term unemployed individuals are not the primary target group of this project.

## **4.6 Introduction of services in the fields of knowledge-sharing and knowledge management**

### **4.6.1. Kultivar**

Kultivar is a networking community space in Liberec. They mostly focus on design, art, and craftsmanship. Kultivar was identified as good practice example and more detailed information can be found in the next chapter of this document.

### **4.6.2 CML**

CML was also intended to become a knowledge-sharing platform offering the co-working space. Unfortunately, this idea was not turned into a life and the reasons for this are explained in the Bad practices chapter.

## 4.7. Examination of collaboration of existing services, their potential for improvement

At the moment, there is virtually no cooperation amongst the regional innovation ecosystem actors. The public administration on both regional and city level ignored this area for a long time. Consequently, a number of projects were spontaneously established without any relevant coordination. Some of these project activities overlap, while some areas of innovation remain untouched. Additionally, some projects can be classified as successful, while others struggle.

Fortunately, the Liberec region office realized this and would like to change the status quo. As the first step, they will organize a conference where all key regional innovation ecosystem players were invited (our company is one of them) to participate in the discussion about the intended regional Innovation Center – Business Incubator.

## 5. IDENTIFICATION OF RELEVANT POLICIES AND LEGISLATION

### 5.1 General overview of the policy instrument

The Liberec region office has a variety of policy instruments focused on youth. However, they are mostly related to the regional education system. The region office is responsible for supervision, controlling, funding, and partly management of all school facilities located in the Liberec region. Therefore the policy instruments primarily define these matters.

Unfortunately, only a minority of these instruments concern leisure activities of youth. Although it is defined in the latest coalition program statement, specifically in Section 5: School system, education, and employment support which says “In cooperation with educational and other institutions we will support activities focused on talented students”, this area currently stands back.



## 5.2 Strengths and weaknesses of the policy instrument

The Liberec region is an innovation follower in terms of youth support and youth entrepreneurship. Only a minimum activities are held within the region these days. However, the Liberec region office is aware of this situation and decided to change the status quo by expressing their interest in opening the Innovation Center- Business Incubator managed directly by the region office. This center is supposed to become an innovation flagship of the Liberec region.

The new venue is intended to be a part of the region administrative complex, which is under major reconstruction these days. It should gather various actors operating in the field of innovation, entrepreneurship and youth support including SMEs, academic institutions, non-government organizations, and civil society. The concept builds on the experience of similar centers from other regions of the Czech Republic.

At the moment, the biggest issue is the financing as there are no funds left in the regional budget. All regional financial reserves were already spent on the massive reconstruction of remaining administrative complex buildings. The Liberec region office is currently exploring other options for financing, mostly from grants and subsidies.

## 5.3 Influence of policy instrument

There are a perfect match and complementarity between the intended Innovation Center – Business Incubator and the New Generation Skills project. As the NGS aims primarily at young individuals with no practical business experience, it is a great opportunity how to enrich and expand the scope of Innovation Center services. There will be four different incubation/acceleration programs prepared for young innovators. The choice of the proper program depends on the investment stage of the business. The New Generation Skills could serve as an entry-level program for those young individuals, who are interested in starting their own business, yet they do not possess the relevant entrepreneurship skills. After completing this program, they can move to the next incubation programs.

## 6. GOOD PRACTISES

### 6.1 Student Business Club of Technical University of Liberec

#### 6.1.1 Background of the good practice example

##### **Problems before implementation**

Top-level results in research and science, excellence in teaching and interdisciplinary collaboration have stood for the Technical University of Liberec since 1953. Around 7000 students study at seven faculties and one specialized institute. In the field of technology transfer, the Technical University of Liberec has a tradition of research in close cooperation especially with the textile and automotive industries. This has guaranteed excellent placements to graduates. Furthermore, the University is involved in more than 100 research projects worth almost USD 3 million and in contract research. While connected globally, the University understands its responsibility as an institution uniquely located in Central Europe and engages in cross-border projects.

It is clear, that The University has been primarily focused on the engagement of future employees rather than entrepreneurs. The Student Business Club decided to change the status quo.

##### **Preparation**

The Student Business Club was established by lecturers of the Economic Faculty. They were inspired by other similar organizations abroad and in the Czech Republic as well and thus they decided to establish such organization also in Liberec. During the preparation process, they were unanimously supported by the University top management.

##### **Project objectives and purposes**

The mission is to support young business-oriented students and boost them towards their successful ventures. The Student Business Club offers an alternative solution for students, who would rather prefer to start their own business over being employed.

## **Project beneficiaries**

The main target group is students or alumni of the Technical University of Liberec.

### **6.1.2 Implementation of the good practice example**

#### **Project activities**

The Student Business Clubs organizes a series of workshops focused primarily on the entrepreneurship skills and knowledge vital to survive and succeed in the fierce real business world environment. These workshops are led by experienced coaches, mentors, and tutors.

Apart from that, the Student Business Club organizes a contest for students with the best business plan every year. The winner gets a small financial incentive and vouchers for services provided by the University.

#### **Management**

The Student Business Club is co-founded and led by Mr. Jaroslav Demel, who works at the Department of marketing and trade and the same time he is a vice-dean for public relations. Another co-founder is Mrs. Klara Antlova, who is the head of the Department of Informatics and works as the vice-dean for science and research.

#### **Monitoring and evaluation system**

The monitoring and evaluation procedures are conducted internally by the University.

#### **Obstacles and problems**

The biggest obstacle was to change the mindset and attitude of students, who did not recognize the University in-house staff as competent to lead the Student Business Club. They mostly argued that University professors with no relevant business experience should not be in charge of such organization.

## **Problem-solving practices**

Fortunately, this problem was solved by the engagement of external experts in relevant fields (business development, finance, marketing, etc.) who are fully capable and also respected by students. Probably the most important “catch” is the cooperation with MITON company, which is the regional leader operating in the online business and e-commerce.

## **Innovative elements and novel approaches**

Engaging young students in the entrepreneurship activities within the university curriculum is a brand new approach. Unlike in other western countries, the cooperation between universities and professionals is a quite uncommon approach in the Czech Republic.

### **6.1.3 Transferability and lesson learned**

#### **Evaluation results**

The project certainly made a significant impact on the University students. Furthermore, it strengthened the cooperation between the University and other regional innovation ecosystem actors. Unfortunately, the project is still not perfectly fine-tuned due to the limited capacities of the University in terms of financial support for students and level of cooperation with successful regional entrepreneurs, investors, and experts.

#### **Lessons learnt**

In order to set up a successful business-oriented organization within the academic environment, it is crucial to establish a long-lasting and productive cooperation between the University and other key regional stakeholders as the University itself is not capable of running the incubator or business club alone without an additional support.

#### **Success factors**

Probably number one success factor is the commitment of founding lecturers, who decided to establish such organization at the University. The project would not be implemented if the University top management was not dedicated to supporting it. The partnership with MITON also played a role.

## **Transferability**

The general concept is easily transferable to other regions. The only essential condition is to have a functional and respected university or college within the particular region.

## **6.2 MultiVAR**

### **6.2.1 Background of the good practice example**

#### **Problems before implementation**

Before the Kultivar was opened in Liberec, there was no co-working space or shared office in the city or in the region. Co-working facilities are mostly used by freelancers or independent specialists, who usually prefer to work from home and thus do not have a chance to interact with each other.

#### **Preparation**

The Kultivar project was prepared and implemented by the group of young and creative people, who felt the need of a venue, where they could create new art, organize events for public and also be able to co-work. The long preparation phase successfully escalated, when the proper venue was found.

#### **Project objectives and purposes**

The original main project objective is to support young artists and craftsmen from the Liberec region by providing them with space, where they can let their creative ideas flow. Eventually, the venue became a center of workshops, exhibitions, co-working and other art-related events.

#### **Project beneficiaries**

The main target group is the community of artists in Liberec, who do not have their own creative studio or any other working space. The Kultivar offers them a great solution for such issue. Besides of artists, another target group is a general public as the majority of workshops and events are intended for a general public to actively participate in.

## 6.2.2 Implementation of the good practice example

### **Project activities**

The Kultivar organizes a number of events with a variety of thematical focus. They offer art courses, workshops, seminars, lectures or art exhibitions. Except for these, there is also a regular yoga class on the premises. Another key activity is the co-working in the shared space for both artists and non-artists. Finally, the Kultivar is the venue for concerts and similar music events.

### **Management**

The Kultivar project is founded and managed by Miss Klara Altova, a young artist from Liberec who won the contest for young regional entrepreneurs organized by the T-Mobile Czech Republic. Since the project was launched, she was able to engage a lot of young and talented individuals, who somehow participate in project activities.

### **Monitoring and evaluation system**

The monitoring and evaluation procedures are conducted internally within the Kultivar.

### **Obstacles and problems**

The biggest problem already occurred in the preparation phase and it was related to funding. The project was listed at the funding platform Hit Hit (the Czech version of Kickstarter) but did not receive sufficient funding. This caused the delay and the project could be only resumed when the adequate funding was found.

### **Problem-solving practices**

At the moment, the Kultivar is co-financed by the non-profit organization. But, in order not to rely only on the external funding, they offer a venue rental and also there are some fees

for the co-working. Additionally, some events and workshops are not for free and the ticket is required for attendees.

### **Innovative elements and novel approaches**

The Kultivar is the first of a kind venue in Liberec. Until then, young artists and craftsmen worked separately and in isolation. The venue represents an inspiring space, where they can boost their creativity and work on their own projects together with others.

### **6.2.3 Transferability and lesson learned**

#### **Evaluation results**

The project was able to raise a brand awareness amongst the community and general public as well. Nowadays, workshops, exhibitions, and other events are organized on the weekly basis with and they are very popular amongst the people of Liberec. Overall, the project was launched successfully and is on the right path of becoming the respected regional community center.

#### **Lessons learnt**

For young innovators such as Miss Altova, it is really difficult to become a respectful partner for well-established organizations including the public administration. Especially, when it comes to the funding. The social entrepreneurship is at the very beginning in the Liberec region.

#### **Success factors**

The game-changing moment was the success in the regional contest for young entrepreneurs organized by the T-Mobile Czech Republic. Miss Altova proved her entrepreneurial skills and knowledge, which she could eventually capitalize.

#### **Transferability**

The project is easily transferrable to other Danube regions. However, in order to be implemented successfully, it has to take the bottom-up approach when young innovators will overtake the project leading role. If the project was managed by public administration, it would only lead to the creation of artificial structure, which cannot last long.

## 6.3 EDUCA MY JOB

### 6.3.1 Background of the good practice example

#### **Problems before implementation**

In Liberec region, there are tens of high schools with different specializations. Therefore, for fresh elementary school graduates, it is really difficult to get oriented in their offers. At the same time, it would be really time-consuming for new applicants to visit some of the preferred schools one by one. The combination of these two factors makes one of the most important decisions in life very complicated.

#### **Preparation**

Since 1995, there was a high school fair organized in Liberec every year. After 12 years, in 2007, organizers decided to expand the fair and include also the biggest regional employers, because not every single youngster prefers to continue with their studies. Some of them actually prefer to be employed or to start their own path.

#### **Project objectives and purposes**

The original fair concept was to make the transition between elementary and high school easier and smoother by providing the complete set of information for fresh graduates. Eventually, as the fair expanded, it covered all areas of education and job life. These days, almost each school from the region (no matter whether it is a high school, college, or university) participates at the fair and presents their programs. On top of that, a number of regional well-known companies try to attract fresh graduates as well. Finally, young individuals interested in starting their own businesses are also welcome to participate as there will be some activities specially designed for them.



## **Project beneficiaries**

The primary target group is the fresh elementary and high school graduates, who at that time make their life-changing decisions related to their careers. The second target group is educational and academic institutions, who exhibit at the fair. The last project beneficiaries are the employers, who grant access to the professionals.

### **6.3.2 Implementation of the good practice example**

#### **Project activities**

The three-day fair is organized each year in October so that the students still have time to carefully consider their future decisions. The fair is visited by 10,000 students on average while the numbers are increasing, and there are more than 40 companies and 80 school institutions each year. During the fair, there are other activities prepared for youngsters: e.g. workshops, seminars, career consulting, CV writing tips, language skills testing etc.

#### **Management**

As the fair changed its original thematic focus and expanded its scope for regional employers, the change of venue was necessary in order to meet new requirements of exhibitors. These were related mostly to the capacity of the venue. As the venue moved from the historical building in downtown to the brand new modern indoor sporting arena, the event management was taken over by the new venue staff.

#### **Monitoring and evaluation system**

The monitoring and evaluation procedures are conducted internally within the Home Credit Arena.

#### **Obstacles and problems**

As the fair popularity has been increasing over the time amongst students and the general public, the capacities of the old historical building where the fair was held started to appear as insufficient. Simply put, the space was too small to squeeze all exhibitors in without

compromising their fair stalls. This could potentially create a tension between organizers and exhibitors.

### **Problem-solving practices**

Fortunately, the multi-functional indoor arena was identified and selected as the new proper venue. At the same time, the duration of the fair was extended from two to three days. This measure, therefore, guarantees that all exhibitors have enough time and space to promote their services, while the visitors can carefully select the one, who fits them the most.

### **Innovative elements and novel approaches**

Gathering academic institutions and major regional employers under one event was a game-changing idea for the Liberec region. As they stand next to each other at the fair, visitors have a great opportunity to explore their future career options by the direct engagement with the exhibitors. This should help the young students to realize, whether their pick is actually the best fit for them or they might eventually change their minds and go for something else.

## **6.3.3 Transferability and lesson learned**

### **Evaluation results**

To get over 10,000 people to this kind of event is a great success for organizers. During the surveys, it was revealed that the students and exhibitors were very satisfied with the outcomes of their participations. Another great evidence to prove the success of this event is the history track. It is organized each year since 1995 and since 2007 in the latest format including the employers.

### **Lessons learnt**

The popularity of the event skyrocketed as the circle of exhibitors was expanded. In our opinion, this demonstrates the fact that people rather prefer to multi-thematic event concept rather than dedicating this event only to educational institutions. In the modern

world, the education and future career are well connected and thus it was a great idea of joining those two together under one event.

### **Success factors**

Undoubtedly, the fair builds on the success of its forerunner. The majority of elementary schools organize trips specifically for this event to participate in as it is the biggest education and job fair in the Liberec region. Finally, the event is officially supported by the Liberec region office.

### **Transferability**

The fair concept is easily transferable into other Danube regions. It only requires a team of professionals able to organize such event, a proper venue and the good relationships with local stakeholders including the public administration, education and business sphere.

## **7. BAD PRACTISES**

### **7.1 Co-workingový motor Liberec (Liberec Co-working Engine)**

At the beginning, the idea was simple. To provide a co-working space for young individuals in Liberec, where they could work and turn their creative and inspiring ideas into ventures.

So the founders started to search for an adequate space in the Liberec downtown. When they found one, they provided the space with the furniture and other relevant equipment. Finally, they compiled price lists for the room rentals and waited, who will knock the door.

However, they were unpleasantly surprised by the small response of the market. It turned out, that not so many people were actually interested in their services.

The reason was simple – the founders did not put any sort of spirit into the place. It was simply an office space with chairs and data projectors. They did not come up with their own content, e.g. to organize workshops or other events. By doing so, they would raise the brand awareness and thus attracted the organic traffic to their venue.

This venue can be classified as a bad practice, especially compared to the Kultivar project (described in the previous chapter), which is only a few meters away.

## 8. CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this comparative local case study is the mapping of regional innovation environment with respect to the youth entrepreneurship.

The study clearly demonstrates the current state-of-art of the local innovation ecosystem. There is a number of organizations operating in the field of innovations and youth entrepreneurship including the social entrepreneurship. Unfortunately, all these activities are conducted separately without any synergic effects.

Both local and regional public administrations have not been very active in supporting young entrepreneurs towards their successful ventures. The expression of interest in building the local Innovation Center – Business Incubator is their first contribution to the topic.

In our opinion, this is something that needs to be changed as young innovators are the dynamics of the economic growth and their importance should not be ignored. Both municipality and region should reflect needs of young entrepreneurs in their official strategic plans and agendas. Local authorities should be also more active in day-to-day management, cooperation, and engagement of young entrepreneurs.

Three good regional practices of working with young and talented people were identified in this study. Their concept is easily transferable to another Danube region country and could serve as an inspiration for other project partners.

Finally, an example of bad practice was also highlighted. This is something that project partners should avoid at any cost.

So what is the bottom line? The innovation environment in the Liberec region is at the very beginning, which is a good opportunity for the public administration to be involved more actively. Despite the missing involvement, some projects were spontaneously formed and established. However, without a long-lasting and systemical support from public

administration, the number of projects and their success rate are not going to be dramatically improved.