

INTERNATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS MEETING



REPORT ON TRANSNATIONAL MEETING

2018

WP3

Strategy for ecoknowledge

ACTIVITY 3.3

Elaboration of Strategy and
Action Plan

DELIVERABLE 3.3.1

International stakeholders
meetings

Project number DTP1-291-1.1
Title of the project Eco-innovately connected Danube Region (Ecolnn Danube)
Version 1.0
Author KSSENA
Project Partner PP2
Country Slovenia
Date 30. 1. 2018

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On Tuesday, January 23rd, 2018, Energy Agency of Savinjska, Šaleška and Koroška Region (KSSENA) organized and implemented the International stakeholder meeting (Deliverable 3.3.1) with the main focus on identifying solutions to overcome common obstacles that hinder the uptake of eco-innovations in countries within the Danube region, an important input for the joint transnational strategy on eco-innovation. The event was hosted by the regional start-up incubator of the Savinjsko-Šaleška region (SAŠA inkubator) and took place in the business center PC Standard in Velenje, Slovenia.

Participants discussed actual needs and requirements of the Danube region for innovations focused specifically on areas of sustainable energy, environmental protection and the circular economy. The event featured national and foreign experts participating in two panel sessions, best practice examples of Slovenian companies and start-ups as well as attendance of experts in relevant fields such as investment, energetics and intellectual property.

The ISM agenda primarily covered following topics:

- *Ecolnn Danube project (Presentation, Green summer schools, Key findings from the analysis of innovation environments in partner countries)*
- *Start-ups and innovation*
- *Amibit Innovative controller for Energy Management information systems*
- *Gorenje Eco-innovation Circle*
- *BOSCH OptiMUM aggregation of evolutionary and incremental innovations*
- *Bringing ideas to the market, opportunities and pitfalls*
- *Strategy for the future development of innovation support structures in the Danube region.*

2. FACT SHEET

VENUE

PC Standard, 3320 Velenje, Slovenia

DATE OF THE MEETING

23. 1. 2018

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

41

TOPICS DISCUSSED

- Identification of obstacles , issues and opportunities for eco-innovation in Slovenia and Danube region
- Opportunities and pitfalls in the process of bringing ideas to the market
- Patenting innovations
- Status of innovation activities and their impact in the Danube region
- Key areas to be addressed and next steps to improve the status of eco-innovation in the Danube region
- Education and eco-innovation
- Development of the joint strategy for the Danube region

PARTICIPANTS:

The event was organized by the Energy Agency of Savinjska, Šaleška and Koroška Region and featured participation of the Ecolnn Danube project partners and national and international experts from fields of:

- investment,
- energetics,
- circular economy,
- intellectual property,
- sustainable architecture.

3. RESULTS OF THE MEETING

Within the International stakeholders meetings first session, representatives from Ecolnn Danubes consortium member organizations presented key aspects of the projects including achieved results and ongoing/forthcoming activities. To this end, Digitalis Jolet presented basic information about the Ecolnn Danube project, followed by Bwcon with a presentation on the organization and results of the Green summer school that took place in Germany in 2017 as well as 2 upcoming events in 2018. A representative from the research institute Economica Austria presented results of the analysis of innovation environments in partner countries (National reports on obstacles and opportunities). This presentation was followed up by a representative of the local business incubator “SAŠA inkubator” focusing on impact and support of organizations such as business incubators in the process of evolving ideas and innovations within start-ups. In the continuation of the meeting, representatives from AMIBIT, Gorenje, and BOSCH presented their companies and their (eco)-innovative solutions as well as their opinion on (eco)-innovations from a corporate viewpoint.

After individual presentations, the meeting continued with the first panel discussion focusing on the topic of the opportunities and pitfalls when bringing ideas to the market.

The first panel discussion brought together representatives from the Chamber of Commerce and industry of Slovenia, Slovenian Intellectual Property Office, Intellectual Property Rights Consulting and Gorenje group. The main goal of the first panel discussion was to define opportunities as well as obstacles and questions that arise during the process of innovation and thereafter launching an eco-innovative product or service to the market. Panelist discussed the state of the supporting environment for eco-innovations in Slovenia, compared it to other countries and commented different awarding prizes for eco-innovations. It was found that, in general, awareness for sustainability and eco-innovations in Europe has risen to a quite good level in past years, however, substantial improvement was still required in order to achieve ambitious goals of sustainable development. Several Slovenian companies have already implemented sustainability practices into their mode of operation (efficient use of materials energy, usage of recyclable materials in processes, creating less waste, etc.), but then again majority of companies still do not have a strategy on energy consumption and other sustainability issues in place. One of the most engaging topics were also property rights and patents, whereby panelist commented that innovators should know what exactly they want to do and what to patent. One of the conclusions was that a great share of patents are considered “bad patents” (as in not properly insured against intellectual property theft) and often minimal changes in the patent could invalidate property rights. Moreover, innovators have to decide if it makes more sense to start a patenting process or to use that time more effectively and launch and promote a product/service as soon as possible. Final thought of the first panel discussion was that investing in people and creating space for innovative minds is most important in order to move towards establishment of a sustainable society.

The first session was concluded with networking and sharing of ideas and perspectives between event participants. The second session of the meeting was meant to facilitate an active open discussion between all participants focusing on the strategy for the future development of innovation support structures in the Danube region. Discussion was presided by international experts from 4 organizations, namely the Institute for Economic Research from Austria, the Croatian Agency for SMEs, Innovation and Investments from Croatia, Brno University of Technology from the Czech Republic and Technical College of Applied Sciences Zrenjanin from Serbia. They focused on topics such as performance of countries according to observed metrics for measuring innovation, major obstacles preventing market up-take of eco-innovative products, funding of research and development, role and impact of education, etc. At the beginning of the discussion, the status of innovation activities, outputs and impact in partner countries of Ecolnn Danube was briefly overviewed. Participants also commented the perception, support and rewarding systems of companies, coming to the conclusion that several companies have rewarding system for eco-innovations amongst their employees, however eco-innovations are many times still not seen as an area of great potential from the perspective of many companies. Regarding the co-operation among companies and R&D institutions in the field of eco-innovation, the general opinion was that such connections are still not strong enough and that often research is not directly linked to concrete products

and services. The most engaging topic of the open space discussion was the role and impact of education in individual's progress and skills development. Participants shared an opinion that the issues of insufficient level of knowledge transfer was one of the main obstacles of educational systems, which are becoming more and more adaptive with regard to the pace of technological advancement but are somehow still not using appropriate approach in stimulating the creativity of students at different levels of education. Imbalance among course of studies and actual demands of the economy for human resources is still present, which is resulting in a shortage or surplus of human resources in various fields. Final thought of the open space discussion was that every failure is a step to success, which should present an incentive for young people to persist in pursuing their ideas, especially through eco-innovations.

4. Summary: Ideas, solutions and recommendations

- Awareness for sustainability and eco-innovations in Europe is at a good level compared to previous decades.
- Science, research and development (including STEM fields in general) should be more intensely supported by the national governments
- Bringing about social cohesion of a sustainable society will require substantial investment in people and the supporting structures for innovation
- Great share of patents are worthless in terms that they're not properly designed to protect against intellectual property theft - minimal changes in the patent can invalidate property rights.
- Innovators must choose either to start a patenting process or to use that time more effectively and launch and promote a product/service as soon as possible.
- Uptake of eco-innovations will be supported by the further adaptation and enforcement of environmental legislation
- Only some larger, more successful companies have internal reward systems in place, including for eco-innovations
- Many companies still don't consider the area of eco-innovation as great investment value/potential for boosting competitiveness over the long-term.
- Insufficient level of knowledge transfer from academia and R&D to companies is a big issue.
- Research and development frequently not linked to any marketable product or service.
- Educational programs are in the majority not using new advancement in technology supported learning, programs are focused on regurgitation instead of problem solving and critical thought.
- Poor level of communication between industry requirements and output of educational systems.
- Huge imbalance of requirements of economies (national businesses) and what secondary and tertiary education produce, from a perspective of human resources
- Cross-border mobility of people is a challenge for less developed countries (brain drain)

ANNEXES

- 1. Invitation and agenda*
- 2. Photo documentation*



Energy agency of Savinjska, Šaleška and Koroška region in cooperation with Start:UP Velenje kindly invites you to the:

International stakeholder meeting organized within the project:

Ecolnn Danube

The event will feature:

- **National and foreign experts** participating in 2 panel sessions
- Best practice examples of **Slovenian companies and start-ups**
- Attendance of experts in the fields of investment, energetics, **circular economy, intellectual property, sustainable architecture**, and more...

The event will take place in:

Venue: **PC Standard – Šaleška cesta 2, Velenje**

Country: **Slovenia**

Date: **Tuesday, 23 January 2018**

The purpose of the meeting is to identify solutions to overcome common obstacles that hinder the uptake of eco-innovations. Participants will discuss actual needs and requirements of the Danube region for innovations focused specifically on areas of sustainable energy, environmental protection and the circular economy. Participants will gain knowledge about the challenges and opportunities their countries currently face and will jointly contribute to the development of the common transnational strategy for the Danube region through dialog aimed at sharing of ideas and perspectives.

Annex 1 – Invitation and agenda (second page)

AGENDA

9.00 – 9.30	Registration and coffee
9.30 – 9.45	Welcome speech and introduction

First session

9.45 – 10.05	Presentation of the Ecolnn Danube project <i>Peter Kaldos, Digitalis Jolet</i>
10.05 – 10.20	Supporting value propositions to market <i>Islam Mušič, SAŠA Inkubator</i>
10.20 – 10.40	Organization of Green summer schools <i>Simona Pede, bwCON</i>
10.40 – 11.00	Key findings from the analysis of innovation environments in partners countries <i>Andrea Pitzschke, Economica - Institute for Economic Research</i>

11.00 – 11.20 Tea/Coffee & networking break

11.20 – 11.35	Innovative controller for Energy Management Information systems <i>Aleš Nastran, AMIBIT</i>
11.35 – 11.50	Gorenje Eco-innovation Circle <i>Dr. Aleš Mihelič, Gorenje group</i>
11.50 – 12.10	BOSCH OptiMUM: aggregation of evolutionary and incremental innovations <i>Dr. Blaž Florjanič, BSH Nazarje</i>
12.10 – 13.00	Panel discussion: Bringing ideas to the market, opportunities and pitfalls <i>Simona Rataj, Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia</i> <i>Dr. Klemen Grošelj, Slovenian Intellectual Property Office</i> <i>Tadej Černivec, Intellectual Property Rights Consulting</i> <i>Dr. Aleš Mihelič, Gorenje group</i>

Annex 1 – Invitation and agenda (third page)

13.00 – 14.00

Lunch

Second session

14.00 – 15.30

Open space discussion on the strategy for the future development of innovation support structures in the Danube region.

Andrea Pitzschke, Economica - Institute for Economic Research

Vedran Đidara, Croatian Agency for SMEs, Innovation and Investments

Vratislav Harabiš, Brno University of Technology

Robert Molnar, Technical College of Applied Sciences Zrenjanin

The discussion will be presided by 4 international experts that will attempt to guide the discussion and answer questions from participants. The format of the discussion will be highly interactive, allowing participants to share their views and opinions without prejudice. The discussion will be opened by briefly reflecting upon the status of innovation activities, outputs and impact in partner countries, according to essential metrics observed in the process of research and national report development. Participants will then jointly share their views on key areas to be addressed and next steps to consider in order to improve the status of eco-innovation in partner countries and jointly contribute to the development of the joint strategy.

Key topics:

- Performance of countries according to observed metric for measuring innovation
- Potential advantages for facilitating eco-innovation in the Danube region
- Major obstacles preventing market uptake of eco-innovative products
- National targets for energy conservation and reducing GHG emissions
- Funding of research and development
- Policies landscape in support of eco-innovation in the Danube Regions
- Supporting instruments required to boost eco-innovation in the Danube
- Role and impact of education

15.30

End of the official part followed by networking and drinks

Annex 1 – Invitation and agenda (fourth page)

[Register here](#)

There is no registration fee, but registration for the international stakeholder meeting is required. Space is limited. Reservations will be accepted in the order they are received. To receive project materials at registration, please register by 15 January 2018. Late registration and walk-ins will be accepted, material will be distributed as available.

For additional information please contact the organizers:

Energy agency for Savinjska, Šaleška and Koroška region (KSENA)

E: info@kssena.velenje.eu

T: +386 (0)3 8961 520

SAŠA Inkubator

E: info@sasainkubator.si

T: +386 (0)3 7777 103

About Ecolnn Danube

Project **Ecolnn Danube** ("Eco-innovatively connected Danube Region") was approved in the 1st call of the Danube Transnational Programme and is implemented by 13 project partners and 3 associated strategic partners from 12 European Countries. The lead partner of the project is the Slovak Centre of Scientific and Technical Information. General objective of the Ecolnn Danube project is to enhance the cooperation of innovation actors in the field of eco-innovations with special emphasis on development and application of ecotechnologies in the Danube Region.

Annex 2 – Photo documentation



