



**A guide to organising internal learning sessions to
support building innovative management methodologies
and capacities of local municipalities in the
NewGenerationSkills Project**



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Introduction

Young generations play a vital role in driving innovation and have a great potential to bring changes into their local communities. While most young people in Central and Eastern Europe do not take an interest in establishing their own businesses, there is still a group of them who are motivated to become entrepreneurs but find it rather difficult. For young generations to be able to realise their own business ideas, it is necessary to develop skills and find the environment in which they are encouraged to have innovative ideas and be able to make a lasting difference especially on a social level that is adaptable by public and private sectors transnationally. One of the main focuses of the NewGenerationSkills project is to strengthen the entrepreneurial culture and to reduce the innovation management gaps in the Danube Region by improving the existing cooperation mechanisms between local municipalities, educational institutions, organisations representing local youth and the business sector. This group is called the quadruple helix whose role is to support innovative initiatives, such as innovation labs and innovative learning sessions, by working in a joint transnational network. Focusing on youth innovation will result in better economic performance, reduce the brain drain phenomenon and positively affect the quality of life in the local working and living environment.¹

¹ New Generation Skills Application Form, pp. 1-2

Using this guide

This guide has been designed to provide practical advice on the organisation of 14 internal knowledge sharing workshops (2/city) that aims to provide local municipalities with guidance on how to take the facilitator role in the aforementioned quadruple helix cooperation to boost innovation and motivation for youth entrepreneurship. As described in WP3 of the project, by organising these workshops/learning sessions, the local municipalities will be enabled to develop their own innovation ecosystems by exchanging experience, best practices and lessons learnt, and also by bringing together employees of different internal and external departments to share knowledge and introduce new ideas. In addition, during these workshops, academic and business actors will have the opportunity to introduce their innovation capacity building activities that can be discussed by the participants and later on adapted by municipalities both inside and outside the partnership.²

The first round of workshops will aim at sharing the 1st year's project results and demonstrate possible challenges and lessons learnt within the participating municipalities, while the second one will focus on improving local municipalities' innovation management capacities, and their skills to be able to adapt and implement innovations into their daily practices. Project Partners to organise and hold the knowledge sharing workshops are Ujbuda, Maribor, NOWA (supported by Akzente), MSG, Sofia, CMA and DEX. Besides partners participating in the NGS project, additional experts from various fields having experience in youth innovation projects are highly recommended to be invited to the workshops.³

In order to ensure the engagement of all stakeholders of the quadruple helix at local level, a group called Local Innovation Advisory Groups (LIAG) has been formed by each participating city. Besides involving all stakeholders of the helix cooperation, LIAGs' responsibility will be to create a network for innovation lab activities and join local business and youth communities (including centres,

² New Generation Skills Application Form, pp. 56

³ New Generation Skills Application Form, pp. 59-60

associations and agencies supporting young generations and innovations) to work together in the innovation lab scheme.⁴

1. Why do we need to share knowledge and best practices internally?

Knowledge sharing is an activity that enables people and organisations to exchange the information, good practices, skills and expertise they possess. Knowledge sharing plays a crucial role in raising awareness among people so they can better understand their own tasks and what is expected of them in order to achieve success and positive results in a project, and also to be able to smoothly cooperate with each other on both a transnational and an internal organisational level. Knowing the right kind of information, best practices and the lessons learnt highly contributes to the successful creation of reports, roadmaps, case studies, action plans and many other types of documents as well as the organisation of events and the completion of daily tasks. Building collective knowledge leads individuals and groups to the resolution of issues and to the prevention of future mistakes, and it also encourages innovation. Creating an environment where innovation and knowledge sharing is encouraged helps individuals and whole organisations to achieve positive and long-lasting results and also to expand their skill set and expertise.

2. Specific knowledge and information-sharing techniques

The following knowledge and information-sharing techniques enable participants to exchange knowledge, information and experience in an interactive way and it is highly recommended to apply them. The more interesting a workshop is made, the more engaged and willing participants are to actively take part in the given activities.

Expert presentations enable the expert/presenter to introduce the specific topic addressed and extend the knowledge of the audience.

Discussions encourage people to share and exchange their views, knowledge and experience on different topics in an interactive manner.

⁴ NewGenerationSkills Application Form, pp. 58

Peer assist is a very useful, dialogue-based cooperation technique when people would like to benefit from the insights of more experienced professionals on specific topics. With this technique the experts can introduce the background and data of their project to attendants of the workshop who are starting or are new to a project. Once the introduction is completed, the two groups can work together to identify potential risks, challenges and problems and also to find solutions to them. During these activities, the members of each group can switch to another group and share their issues faced and ideas with each other.⁵

Group work is a very effective way for a higher number of participants (10-15) to work together and discuss different topics and previously prepared questions freely. It is a great technique to share and exchange knowledge, experience and opinions on specific topics and be able to advise others on possible solutions.

Problem and target trees provide a more visual type of analysis of root causes, effects and solutions of a particular problem. When drawing problem and target trees, participants can freely illustrate root causes, effects and solutions as being parts of the tree according to their own imagination.

Brainstorming is a creative group activity by which a list of ideas can be gathered by the participating members in order to find conclusions, solve a problem or make an important decision together.

“World Café” is a very popular and interactive process for learning and knowledge sharing during which groups of people, including a host, sit at several tables to discuss a topic and switch places with others at different tables from time to time. By doing so, the participants can share and connect their innovative ideas with new groups of people and exchange their knowledge and experience with each other. During this activity the participants are advised to take notes.

SWOT analysis is a tool to analyse the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of a project so the project members can be more prepared to make the right decisions and achieve success in their projects.

The main purpose of **After Action Review** is to learn by thinking and talking about a completed activity or project without criticising it. Another aim of this technique is to list the lessons learnt during the project rather than trying to find a solution to a problem.⁶

⁵ Canadian International Development Agency knowledge sharing handbook pp. 5

⁶ Canadian International Development Agency knowledge sharing handbook pp. 6

The benefits of the interactive workshops are:

- more active learning, experience and knowledge sharing
- deeper and more open discussions
- networking with different experts, stakeholders and departments
- gaining access to multiple resources
- generating new and innovative ideas

2.1. What to do before the workshops

1. invite and notify people about the planned workshop at least 3 weeks before the date of the workshop by email including the previously prepared agenda
2. choose a location that is accessible and well-equipped
3. select the right techniques for sharing experiences, information and knowledge
4. identify the events at which participants could take part between the two workshops
 - e.g. Innovation Labs, Youth Camp, etc.
5. prepare all documents and items necessary for the workshop
 - attendance sheet
 - presentations (make sure other presenters prepare slides (PowerPoint presentations) and make them interactive), visual aid (videos, posters, etc.)
 - handouts
 - flip-charts
 - pens and markers
 - post-it notes
 - laptops, USB drives, projectors
 - name tags
 - feedback form

2.2. What to do after the workshops

1. send the minutes of the workshop to all participants including:
 - date and title of the meeting
 - names of participants and the organisations they represented

- title of presentations and name of presenters and the organisation they represented
 - the content of the meeting
 - topics, questions, good practices, lessons learnt discussed
 - problems, risks, challenges faced
 - root causes, effects, solutions found
 - techniques used
 - results, conclusions made
 - materials used
 - feedback discussed (to be taken into consideration at the second workshop)
 - relevance and content of the workshop
 - quality of presentations, facilitation
 - techniques and methods used
2. send registration form for the second workshop
 3. send feedback form to those who did not have the chance to provide feedback at the end of the workshops

3. Guidelines for the first round of workshops

The first internal workshop is to be conducted in Period 3 (or4) and its main objective is to present the achieved results of the previous periods on local and transnational levels, for example, the creation of the 7 Local Innovation Advisory Groups (LIAG) and their regular local workshops, the preparation for the setting up of Local Innovation Labs, the cooperation between the quadruple helix actors, etc. and to also highlight the lessons learnt during these periods. While holding traditional presentations during which the attendants listen to the presenter without interrupting is well-known, there is a more stimulating and interactive learning process that is becoming more and more popular among the presenters and the participants, as people can share knowledge, discuss topics and benefit from each other's views and experiences.

3.1. Who to invite to the first workshop

When organising a workshop, it is highly important to invite the people who are related to the topics addressed, have the relevant experience, information and knowledge to share along with

those, who can benefit from what they learn at the particular event. In the case of the NGS project, the following participants are recommended to be invited:

- key people working on the project from inside and outside the municipality to talk about the project results, experiences and what innovative practices are implemented and successfully applied on a day-to-day basis within their own municipalities
- employees from other departments (e.g. Press and Communication Department, Human Resources and Social Departments) of the municipality who are not involved in the NGS project but can share their own views, experiences and knowledge and propose innovative ideas while learning about the whole of the project

3.2. Methods to be used during the first workshop

Several knowledge-sharing methods can be applied in a workshop and tailored to the specific topics addressed, for example:

- asking for the (professional) opinion of the Press and Communication Department on the executed local campaign and the photo competition
- brainstorming about how different departments can assist each other in projects
- talking about potential projects they could work on together in the future
- presenting the results of the project's social events to inspire other departments
- asking for advice from the Youth Development Department on how to motivate and attract young generations to take part in the project and what kind of events and activities should be organised
- discussing how successful the first e-newsletters are, whether they truly communicate the aim and results of the project and if they comply with the image of the local municipality
- working in groups to discuss processes and lessons learnt by sharing knowledge
- holding Q&A, brainstorming and peer assist sessions
 - asking participants about their expectations of the workshop and to provide feedback at the end
 - discussing how to attract people to participate and stay in the project (relating to visiting the LABs and HR recruitment)
 - talking about how other countries can work with NGOs, for example

- demonstrating possible challenges within the participating municipalities and finding a resolution for them together
- analysing local case studies
- discussing the improvement areas within the municipalities and how to address them

3.3. Preparing for the second workshop

- study the minutes of the next workshop (that was previously discussed during the first workshop) and think of the meaning of innovation management capacities that will be discussed together during the next workshop session
 - tasks to be completed before the second round of workshops
 - invite people to social events, e.g. visiting Innovation Labs
 - invite people to Youth Camp (in Belgrade)
 - tasks to be completed during the second round of workshops
 - mentors can present how young people should submit a successful application and also to talk about the conditions of projects focusing on youth development
 - reflecting on the outcomes of the first workshop and on the happenings since then
- conduct an ad-hoc survey whether there is anyone interested in
 - joining the project as a trainer, presenter or mentor
 - hearing about the “Train the trainers” methodology
 - people who participated in this training in Maribor, Jan 2018, could give a presentation

4. Guidelines for the second round of workshops

The second round of workshops, will be organised in Period 4 of the project life cycle with the aim of boosting the participating municipalities' innovative management capacities. While the first workshop focuses on achieved results and lessons learnt, the second one aims at collectively creating innovative ideas that can be implemented in the day-to-day operations of the given municipalities. Putting innovative ideas into practices enables an efficient and successful working environment and facilitates the cooperation between municipalities and other organisations on a local and a transnational level, as well.

4.1. Who to invite to the second workshop

- guest lecturers from universities and professionals from the business sector (e.g. LIAG members) who have built and/or adapted innovative learning methodologies and can demonstrate real life examples
- management, senior and junior staff members
- employees from other departments of the municipality (also those who participated in the first workshop)
- young beneficiaries of the NGS project to share their own experience
- experts of the LIAG and mentors to share their own experiences and views on the quadruple helix cooperation as well as professionals from the academic and business sectors who have previously worked on youth innovation projects
- young beneficiaries of the NGS project to share their own experience

4.2. Methods to be used during the second workshop

As mentioned above, the aim of this workshop is to support the boosting of the participating municipalities' innovation management capacities. Improving innovative management skills helps organisations to be able to effectively address youth development and integrate new and efficient solutions in their daily operations. For this learning session to be successful, organisers and participants are highly advised to:

- summarise the activities and results of the first workshop and reflect on the feedback of the participants
- ask the attendants about their expectations of the second workshop session, facilitate a short discussion about the desired outcomes of the workshop
- ask participants to report on the events they have attended between the two workshops
- discuss in groups the aim of the meeting, what innovative management capacity means and how it could be improved in the municipalities
- ask guest presenters to talk about their experiences and knowledge through
 - presentations
 - Q&A sessions
 - story telling/sharing personal experiences
- hold brainstorming sessions to create innovative ideas
 - identify the channels through which employees could share their innovative ideas, knowledge and good practices on a daily basis (e. g. newsletters, internal knowledge-sharing “Wiki” pages)
- organise team work with the help of techniques mentioned in section 2. Specific knowledge and information-sharing techniques of this guide
 - peer assist: during this knowledge-sharing activity, each participant has the opportunity to present a problem faced during project implementation and find viable and innovative solutions to the problem with the help of experienced attendants
 - ask each group to summarize their findings
- create and implement innovative methods in the municipalities daily operations and create an environment where new ideas are appreciated and welcome
 - begin recurring (weekly, bi-weekly, monthly) meetings with a brainstorming session
 - gamification: introduce prize for best new idea (e.g. ‘Innovator of the Month’ award)
 - install (virtual) idea boxes so whenever an employee has a new idea, they can share it with others
 - conduct regular satisfaction surveys

- organise field visits for the municipalities' employees to other municipalities, universities, business companies or the innovation labs set up by the NGS project
- as mentioned above, set up internal communication platforms
 - e.g. a “Wiki” page where all employees can share useful documents, guidance, lists of experts to be contacted about specific topics, etc.
- bring together management, senior and junior staff levels
 - take an interest in the insights of junior staff members of the municipalities, hear their voices and innovative ideas, ask them about their expectations and what would motivate them to start their own businesses

Conclusion

Overall, this guide aimed to help municipalities to learn more about knowledge-sharing techniques and methods and also receive practical guidance on how to organise the workshops, who are the participants to invite and how to establish and boost innovative management capacities within the municipalities.

The techniques and methods described in this guide are highly recommended to be used on a day-to-day basis within the municipalities and other organisations in order to enhance effective and smooth cooperation between different teams and enable individuals to efficiently execute their daily tasks and achieve sustainable results.

Annexes

Annex I

AGENDA

Timings are provided for guidance only and can be amended to the participants' requirements

Title:

Place and date:

09:00 – 09:30	Arrival, registration
09:30 – 10.30	Introduction
10:30 – 10:45	Coffee break
10:45 – 12:00	
12:00 – 13:00	Lunch
13:00 – 14:30	
14:30 – 14:45	Coffee break
14:45 – 16:00	

16:00 – 17:00	Conclusions
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Annex II

CHECKLIST

Title:

Place and date:

1. Venue

Task	Responsible	Deadline	Status
Prepare technical details (laptop, projector, sound, flipchart, pens, post-its, etc.)			
Check details at location (organisation of tables, chairs, water, technical details, etc.)			
Name badges (name, title, logo)			
Organize photos to be taken at the workshop			

2. Catering

Task	Responsible	Deadline	Status
Organize catering			
Arrange lunch			

3. Materials to be handed out

Task	Responsible	Deadline	Status
Prepare and send „background” materials to partners: Basic materials, agenda and handouts			
Prepare presentations			

Prepare attendance sheet			
Save presentations/materials of the workshop on a USB drive			

Annex III

ATTENDANCE SHEET

NewGenerationSkills internal learning session

Organised by:

Place and date:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Organisation</u>	<u>Signature</u>

Annex IV

MINUTES OF THE WORKSHOP

- 1. Title:**
- 2. Place and date:**
- 3. Names of participants and the organisations represented:**
- 4. Title of presentations and name of presenters and the organisation they represented:**
- 5. Content of the meeting:**
 - **topics, questions, good practices, lessons learnt discussed**
 - **problems, risks, challenges faced**
 - **root causes, effects, solutions found**
 - **techniques used**
 - **results, conclusions made**
- 6. Materials used:**
- 7. Feedback discussed:**
 - **relevance and content of the workshop**
 - **quality of presentations, facilitation**

- techniques and methods used

Annex V

FEEDBACK FORM

Title:

Place and date:

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Unsatisfied	Very unsatisfied
Relevance and content of the workshop					
Quality of presentations					
Quality of facilitation					
Techniques and methods used					
Duration of the workshop					
Overall, how satisfied are you with this workshop?					

What did you find the most useful and enjoyable?

What did you find the least useful and enjoyable?

Comments and recommendations:

