EIT HEI Initiative

Innovation Capacity Building for Higher Education

European Institute of Innovation & Technology

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D2.3 Introduction course in innovation management for non-academic staff

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Jorun Pedersen (Ard Innovation)
Muris Letic (NMBU)

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Executive Summary

The overall goal for NOBALIS is to increase the institution's innovation capacity. Technical and administrative staff exercise an important support function and a framework for the research and innovation activities. The concrete goal is to raise awareness among individuals of how their role can contribute to increasing this innovation capacity in the HEIs.

Courses were therefore prepared and conducted for non-academic staff. The courses were conducted with a total of 55 participants. The course was open to all non-academic professions in all the participating universities. The delivery consists of course material, experiences from the execution and suggestions for follow-up in the institutions after the completion of NOBALIS.

About the EIT HEI Initiative

The EIT HEI Initiative: Innovation Capacity Building for Higher Education has been designed with the aim of increasing the innovation and entrepreneurial capacity in higher education by bringing together HEIs in innovation value chains and ecosystems across Europe. A central philosophy of the EIT is the integration of the EIT Knowledge Triangle Model into all its activities. HEIs selected to participate in the HEI Initiative will also leverage and use the Knowledge Triangle Model as an enabler, facilitating the creation of systemic, institutional change. Additionally, HEIs selected to participate in the HEI Initiative will contribute to and leverage Smart Specialization Strategies, the Regional Innovation Impact Assessment (RIIA) Framework, as well as align to the goals of the EIT Regional Innovation Scheme (EIT RIS). This will strengthen the links between HEIs and their local and regional ecosystems and provide an impetus to leverage additional funding sources beyond the HEI project funding period of the selected HEI projects.
HEIs are encouraged to prepare applications which will support the development and implementation of six Actions in their institutions, cumulatively leading to institutional transformation, an increase in entrepreneurial and innovation capacity, and integration with innovation ecosystems.

Course arrangement

The course was conducted online with a combination of lectures, group work, a case study, and reflections in plenary. Before the lecture the participants were asked about their expectations and motivations for the course. The course ended with a tour around the table with feedback.

Topics of the lecture:

- Basic understanding of innovation & commercialization function and space
- The university's role and responsibilities as a supplier of innovations
- The university's role as an employer for innovators and employees looking to innovate.
- Knowledge of the contribution and role of own occupational group

Topics of the group sessions:

- To what extent is your university concerned with Impact and Exploitation? And do the researchers have sufficient knowledge of what this entails?
- How well do you think the researchers at your institution know the innovation system at your university?
- Please reflect on your possible role in this

Case study with illustration of Research Impact Canvas. The course given April 10th, 2024, included service innovation and knowledge transfer. With the inclusion of this topic, we had less time, and the case work was taken out of the course. To compensate for this, we spent more time on the Research Impact Canvas tool.

Roles and positions represented.

There were many different positions represented in the course. The course was offered to all non-academic staff in the HEIs, but it was mostly administrative staff that participated with only a few technical staff e.g. laboratory engineer and IT-coordinator:

Research management:
Project manager, Collaborator and project manager, Project developer, Innovation manager and advisor, Research advisor, Research, and development consultant

Administration and support:
IT-coordinator, Senior advisor, Finance advisor, Personal development, EU-advisor, Legal Counsellor, Librarian, Head of communication, Senior specialist of development, Student innovation advisor, Communication advisor, administration consultant, HR advisor, Laboratory engineer, licensing manager,

Leading positions
Head of Centre, Head of section, prorector of research and innovation,

Academic positions
Professor of special planning, Professor of economics

All partner universities were represented.

Reflections from participants

During the course the participants were asked to reflect and share in plenary on a few points questions. The participants answers was written down and utilized to further develop the training course. The first question the participants were asked to reflect on was their motivations for attending the course.

- Need to know, protection of genes.
- Public education, get the knowledge out to people.
- Entrepreneurship, be a part of developing a more entrepreneurial culture. Being a part of a project. Entrepreneurial awareness
- Surroundings needs for more innovation knowledge. Support our researchers.
- Making our working days more interesting
- Inspire the Scientist and university, Potential, Practical
- Want to give something back, help others to set up their own company.
- To understand the commercial systems
- Library, Open science, to contribute to make research useful.
- Great research – support researchers in general. Great producers also innovations
- Research and innovation services, try to offer support in innovation.
- Help the researchers, funding, and further research. Capacity to secure their IPR. See possibilities to use their research.
- Hear more and support more.
- Development between relations
- Innovation and commercialization
- Motivate to innovation.

- How to work with the academics
- Want to know more about the process.
- Build capacity, new approach, how to cooperate with private investors.
- Know more about the process.
- Learn more about impact.
- Learn how aspects from research commercialization can be utilized when working with students.
- Learn how to communicate and cooperate with external enterprises.
- Increase innovation capacity in their own unit.
- Increase the amount of innovation output in their own unit.
- Learn new methods for social impact.
- Learn new methods for innovation.
- Learn more about the financing of innovation.
- Learn about innovation and the opportunities this gives the Ph.D. candidates.
- How the engineers can support researchers in innovation.
- Learn how to increase awareness.
-

In addition to asking the participants about their own motivations for attending the course, we also asked the participants to reflect on if their HEI is concerned with impact and exploitation, and if they think the researchers are aware of the innovation ecosystem. Feedback on reflections on system and awareness

- Agree on surprised on how little focus on innovation. The researchers do not know. Introduction course and repetition + PhD-education, once a year
- Need meeting places – support researchers on how the projects could be innovative. Gap between the scientists and the commercialization management. Need a tool.
- This needs to be more known, that you know about the services from your institution. Difference between intended and planned innovation or by accident and other way of dealing with this.
- How we do this today with applications. Research administration need a list of good questions when meeting an applicant. Knowing where to get help.
- Not all researchers want to do this. There is a need for support. Lack of support. Its time consuming – time for the researcher
- Need to Increase awareness. Its person dependent. Showcase – good examples. Workshops and training.
- Elevate the knowledge in general. The value in exploitation. Educate everyone. Anchored in strategy plans.

- To have a roadmap from early stage. Start early. Support and awareness.
- Have a roadmap available. Need the steps of the process.
- They wanted to talk more. Important to raise awareness, just spreading inspiration.
- Support players, who to contact, creating mindset, communicate the value in the research. See the whole university main strategic points of the university.
- Ip-coordinator: protect the data. Assist with infrastructure that is needed. What you cab share or not share. Search for what is new or not.
- People, helping people. Creating processes, some experience, double role for researchers
- Cooperation with different actors. Both not commercial and commercial parts on innovation impact
- Learn more about patents and research.
- Impact and commercialization in consortiums. Need for guidelines for non-academic. Grant application writing
- In Polan: Librarian helping with patent search. TTO Missing scheme for Social Sciences.
- How to build teams
- How to use TTO
- Share information, how and when. How the process works. Ned a flyer
- Time is a big factor, meeting to learn.
- It's not well enough known, needs to be clearly shown "what's in it" for the researchers.
- Reflections on whether the university have or should have innovation/commercialization as a main task.
- A lot of the research is applied research, and we talk about innovation, but it's unclear how much output it generates.
- The researcher needs to realize this is relevant for them. It takes time to change culture. It's a disconnection between the leadership of the university and implementation in practice.
- Everyone has a way to contribute to innovation.
- We need to be aware of the process and timeline, and where each role has a function to make it easier to do project management and provide the right assistance to the researchers.
- Be aware of pitfalls in communication of possible innovation projects.

Feedback on expectations

The feedback from the participants was mostly positive. Many felt it was useful to reflect on their own role in innovation work. The participants also felt that some of the tools presented were useful in their own everyday lives. In addition, there was a call for more examples, tools and especially a flyer or roadmap that the individual could have as a checklist. The addition of service innovation was greatly appreciated and served as a good point for discussion to also include other than strictly commercial applications of research results.

In the sessions where we did not have time for a case study for the participants, we received feedback stating that it would have been great to get the opportunity to test what they learn and learn more about how to utilize, not just know of the topic. We expected this, but we tested it after receiving feedback from prior participants that it could be challenging to set aside a full working day to attend the course.

There was also agreement that this offer should be available to non-academic staff even after the NOBALIS project has been completed. Tools to assist in innovation processes and overview of the innovation ecosystem should be accessible in the universities web pages/digital workplace.

Further improvements for the future

- More examples and case-studies.
- Follow-up on regulations
- Suite of tools
- Make a roadmap for projects.
- More internal communication in the HEIs to raise awareness of ecosystem, opportunities, regulations, and responsibilities.

Course dates and participants.

The table below shows the number of participants each time the course was delivered. All HEIs have had participants in the training course, but not every HEI had participants in each of the courses given. The table also indicates how many HEIs were represented each time.

Table 1. Participation in the courses

Distribution of participants		
Date of Course	**No of participants**	**No of universities represented**
15.11.22	15	5
07.06.23	10	3
15.11.23	13	3
10.04.24	13[1]	3

[1] At the time of writing the deliverable we are missing 7 participants to reach our KPI target of 20 trained non-academic staff in phase 2b. We have scheduled additional training in June 2024. Details will be accessible in the HEI KPI reporting structured data deliverable as a part of the end of project review.

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hei@eitrawmaterials.eu

eit-hei.eu

@EIT_HEI

@EIT HEI Initiative