

T-Pot News: Participation of T-Pot at RCI Working Group on Innovation meeting, Split, Croatia

Saturday, 09 July 2011

Representative of T-Pot

project assist. prof. Martinia Ira Glogar, Ph.D., University of Zagreb Faculty of Textile Technology, presented the project innovative aspects at the Regional Competitiveness Initiative (RCI) Working Group on Innovation meeting in Split, Croatia, organized in the period 8th June - 10 th June, 2011.

The Regional Competitiveness Initiative (RCI) is a three year project which aims to strengthen the competitiveness of the economies in the Western Balkans in medium to long - term by increasing productivity and output in manufacturing and services sector firms. The RCI group organized a three days meeting in Split, Croatia, from 8 June till 10 June, 2011, with aim in bringing together delegates from all Western Balkan economies, representatives from the private sector and experts from international organizations.

At the first day of meeting, the 8th of June, the working group on Human Capital Development was organized aiming on focusing on the theme of "skills for innovation", meaning improving competitiveness by strengthening skills that support innovations.

The agenda covered the following items:

- Identifying skills for innovation and using skills gaps analysis
- Sector specific approaches to skills gaps in the Western Balkans
- Horizontal actions to strengthen skills for innovation
- Supporting Skills for Innovation: Key Lessons Learned and Regional Responses

The working group consists of three sessions:

Session 1 - Identifying skills for innovation and using skills gaps analysis,

Session 2- Sector specific approaches to skills gaps in the Western Balkans;

Session 3 - Horizontal actions to strengthen skills for innovation and

Session 4 - Supporting Skills for Innovation: Key lessons learned and Regional Responses.

The presenters in Session 1 were: Mr. Milan Konopek from Investment Compact for South East Europe, OECD, with lecture "Improving competitiveness by implementing skill gap analysis in the Western Balkan"; Ms. Evgenia Petkova from Operations Department, European Training Foundation, with lecture "The relevance of skill gaps analysis and skills forecasting for modernising VET and HE systems in the Western Balkans: the ETF experience" and Ms. Violeta Stojanovic, from Agency for Employment, FYR Macedonia with lecture "Skills needs analysis in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia".

The session closed with a tour de table whereby each participant flagged initiatives being undertaken in their economy to measure and assess skills gaps:

Session 2 was focused on examples of sector - specific policy responses to skills mismatches and shortages. Several case studies from the region were presented in order to see how skills needs are being addressed in specific sectors. The focus was on extracting lessons learnt from various projects in the Western Balkan. The case studies were presented by Mr. Boris Krstanovic from Multilink - Croatian ICT Cluster Initiative. He presented the ICT Skills gap analysis performed with the collaboration of the Croatian Chamber of Commerce. Ms. Jadranka Radunovic from Centre for Vocational Education, Montenegro presented the Results of GTZ project 2006 - 2011 on "Creating jobs through vocational education and training with private sector input in pilot sector".

Session 3 was focused on providing examples of projects in the Western Balkans that have been implemented across multiple sectors (or horizontally). The following case studies were presented: Mr. Dragan Milovic, Assistant Minister in Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations from Bosnia and Herzegovina presented the project "EU Support to Regional Economic and SME Development (IPA 2007)". Mr. Uli Lachenmaier, the Team Leader of EU project "Supporting SMEs to become more competitive in an EU project supporting SME development in Albania". Ms. Efka Heder, the director of South East Europe Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning presented SEECELS current work which responds to horizontal skills needs at the regional level.

Session 4 was organized to summarise the day's discussions.

The second day of meeting, 9 June 2011, the Working Group on Innovation was organised entitled "Strengthening linkages between government, industry and research". The agenda covered topics related to policy measures supporting innovation, an update of the four RCI pilot projects, two case studies of initiatives in Albania and Croatia to support innovation, and a discussion of Europe 2020 and which elements are relevant for a South East Europe economic vision.

The first session included a presentation from the European Commission (DG Enterprise) which centred on how government, industry and academia can work together to support innovative activities. Examples of various instruments such as voucher schemes and cluster initiatives were discussed. This was followed by a presentation from the Business Innovation Centre in Croatia (BICRO) which outlined initiatives and actions that institution uses to support greater collaboration between businesses and the research community.

The second session provided updates on the four RCI pilot projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina the project team has organised a series of events in that economy with a view to identifying three concrete partnerships between industry and academia. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia the project team is now preparing a draft assessment of the national innovation system. The next steps in that project will involve developing recommendations and consulting with stakeholders. In Montenegro the project team is in the process of assessing the needs of export-oriented SMEs to understand where a voucher scheme could facilitate greater linkages with researchers. The project team will begin drafting a feasibility study over the summer. In Serbia, the project team has focussed on assessing the innovative activities of firms and researchers in the agrifood and biomedicine sector. The project team visited Slovenia to learn from Slovenian experiences in the development of instruments such as centres of excellence, technology parks and competence centres.

In addition to the RCI pilot projects, the Working Group received updates on innovation supporting actions in Albania and Croatia. The representative from Albania presented gave a detailed presentation on the new Business Innovation and Technology Strategy. The strategy is designed to support that country's competitiveness and strengthen its national innovation system. The Working Group also discussed the results of an FP7 project in Croatia which sought to strengthen linkages between the Faculty of Textile Technology and Croatian SMEs in the textile sector.

Innovative aspect of project
FP7-REGPOT-2008-1-229801: Unlocking the Croatian Textile Research Potentials (T - Pot), has been presented in a session of case studies by assist. prof. Martinia Ira Glogar, Ph.D., University of Zagreb Faculty of Textile Technology, through presentation entitled Regional Competitiveness Initiative. The aims of T-Pot project has been presented:

- 1) to reinforce the research potential of the Faculty of Textile Technology of the University of Zagreb (TTF) in order to strengthen the university sector to become one of the components of the national innovation system in Croatia;
- 2) develop the capacity for breakthrough research, leading to innovative textile and textile related products.

The project's immediate impact included the establishment of new research groups, supported with 2 new laboratories, 3 PhD students and 1 experienced researcher from University of Calabria. The project also organised a series of workshops targeting SMEs with the aim of introducing new technologies. Although this project focuses on textiles its idea could be applied to other sectors as well.

Assist. prof. Martinia Ira Glogar,
Ph.D., University
of Zagreb Faculty of
Textile Technology,

Project member of T-Pot project

The Working Group concluded with a session on the Europe 2020 Strategy and its applicability to a South East Europe economic

vision. The Working Group agreed with most of the elements in Europe 2020 and noted that they are relevant for the SEE region. However, additional elements discussed by the Working Group which should be included in a SEE vision included:

- 1) responses to the brain drain;
- 2) encouraging businesses in SEE to find their niche markets;
- 3) improvements to the business and legal environment are still a priority;
- 4) development of a regional capital market;
- 5) greater export orientation, and;
- 6) an emphasis on governance and institutional strengthening.

The third day of a meeting, 10 June 2011, the round table was organized with following themes: Implementation of the Private Sector Plan 2011 - 2013, Timing for possible new projects and next programming phase for 2014, Western Balkan Investment Framework financing for SMEs and Ideas for new projects.

Agenda: RCI Working group on
Innovation

PPT presentation by assist. prof. Martinia Ira Glogar, Ph.D.