

Bringing Innovation to the Market

RAPIDE – Action Groups – Innovation Voucher



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RAPIDE Action Group Innovation Voucher Questions to the experts



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RAPIDE Action Group **Innovation Voucher**

In the first meeting in June 2009 the RAPIDE Action Group on Innovation Vouchers identified 7 subthemes which needed to be followed up by the individual partners.

- 1. Accreditation of service providers**
- 2. VAT Tax for universities. Especially in the Polish case the Universities have difficulties to sell their services via an Innovation Voucher. They risk getting a totally different taxation status.**
- 3. Who is giving the vouchers, should the one giving the money decide who gets the money?**
- 4. Marketing – how to get the SME's to the vouchers. Different ways of distribution**
- 5. The measurability of assessment and indicators. What are successful ways to assess the impact of innovation voucher schemes?**
- 6. Usage of the Innovation Voucher across the border and ways around the laws that prohibit this**
- 7. Financing is different in every country. What are the possibilities for the cash flow to the invoice/service provider**

Each partner prepared a 2 page document including a short description of the current situation and different possibilities.

At the second meeting in August the partners discussed the documents in detail and formulised some questions for further discussion and clarification at the expert meetings in Brussels on October 6 and 7.

Included partners are:

Milan Darak – Presov, Slovakia
Mark Dennis – Lapland, Finland
Rafal Modrzewski – Kujawsko-Pomorskie, Poland
Norbert Grasselli – Eszak-Alföld, Hungary
Melinda Matrai – Eszak-Alföld, Hungary
Nikos Thomopoulos – MA, Region of Western Greece
Benjamin Kuscher – RAPIDE

1. Accreditation and assessment of service providers

- Would you include only public or also private service providers?
 - i. Why?
 - ii. How do you select?
- Can the SME bring its own consultancy firm and get it accredited immediately?
- Do you evaluate the services of the service providers?
 - i. Samples or all?
 - ii. How?
 - Is the assessment done by an in house administrator or by an expert panel?
- If the service provider is not working well for example they are using the money for other purposes then they are supposed to how is it corrected? Should they be liable to pay back the money? Or If the project the service provider under takes is not successful how can the money be recuperated from the service provider?

2. VAT Tax for universities

- Do you face taxation problems when publicly funded universities are providing services to private companies?

3. Who is giving the vouchers, should the one giving the money decide who gets the money?

- The principle is that the decision on giving the voucher should be as fast as possible. Therefore it should be avoided to include too many institutions into the decision process. Nevertheless the finance department is not always the best unit to assess the potential beneficiary or the service provider. How do you organise the decision process until the payment?

4. Marketing – how to get the SME's to the vouchers. Different ways of distribution

- Since innovation vouchers should be small, fast and flexible it can be understood as a first entry point for SMEs to innovation. However often only a very limited number of SMEs are using this service. To change this, the access to innovation voucher must be as easy and unbureaucratic as possible. Further the SMEs have to know about it. How do you spread the knowledge about the voucher scheme?
- How the SMEs get the voucher?

- i. Every SME which applies and fulfills some minimum criteria get a voucher
- ii. Is there a competition for the voucher and only those with the best proposal get it?
- iii. The selection is done in house or by an expert panel?

5. The measurability of assessment and indicators. What are successful ways to assess the impact of innovation voucher schemes?

- How do you assess innovation voucher schemes?
- How often are you assessing the scheme?
- What kind of indicators are you using?

6. Usage of the Innovation Voucher across the border and ways around the laws that prohibit this

- There is no general solution how to deal with a foreign consultant or service provider and how it would be possible to pay from the national pot to an international service provider.
One of the possibilities is to declare the payment as a subsidy for the local SME. However the actual arrangement has to be agreed locally and needs to fit onto the national legislation.
 - i. Do you have experiences how to include international service providers?
 - ii. Is there more information available?

7. Financing is different in every country. What are the possibilities for the cash flow to the invoice/service provider?

- Only comment that it was sufficient enough that each region had many choices to choose what system worked best for them.

8. Maximum and minimum amount of innovation vouchers

- Since innovation vouchers should be the first entry point for SMEs to innovation it should be small, fast and flexible. However it seems that each scheme understands these criteria in a different way. There are voucher schemes between € 3.000,- up to € 120.000,-.
 - i. What is your experience