

Bringing Innovation to the Market

RAPIDE – Action Groups – Innovation Voucher



MINUTES RAPIDE

RAPIDE Action Group Innovation Voucher online Meeting 27th August 2009



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RAPIDE Action Group Innovation Voucher

For each of the **specific themes**, an **Action Group** will work together to develop new ideas and approaches on the ways to improve the regional innovation support structure.

Each region will bring in its own experiences, expertise and suggestions. External experts will bring additional input to the discussion.

By October 2009 each Action Group member will need to identify and clarify the **RAPIDE Action** in the **Background Paper for the ACTION PLAN** to be developed within their **RAPIDE ACTION PLAN** by May 2010 and implemented right after.

The **Action Group** members will support each other in the entire peer review process which will be crucial for the effective development of RAPIDE Actions.

To achieve the above, the first Action Group meeting was accompanied by a facilitator. This facilitator supported the Action Group discussing and deciding on the necessary inputs and steps for a future co-operation.

A note-taker will be responsible write the minutes of the meeting.

The paper below shortly shows the topics discussed and decided within the Second meeting on 27 of August 2009.

Action Group: Innovation Voucher

6 participants:

Milan Darak – Presov Slovakia

Mark Dennis – Lapland

Rafal Modrzewski – Kujawsko-Pomorskie Poland

Norbert Grasselli – Eszak-Alföld Hungary

Melinda Matrai – Eszak-Alföld Hungary

Nikos Thomopoulos – MA, Region of Western Greece

Session Innovation Vouchers, August 27th 2009.

Review of Sub-theme reports on Innovation vouchers

1. The first sub-theme that was addressed was the Assessment of Service providers that Benjamin provided.

- It was discussed that perhaps a better word to describe the process of finding the service providers would be best if it was renamed assessment or listing of service providers.
- It was also agreed that, to keep the process agile, it should be an easy process to get onto the list of service providers but that it be equally easy to be moved to the black list if the work was not satisfactory.
- The quality checks are not checking the cost of the service provider's only quality which could be risky as the cost should be checked to be within market standards.
- It was agreed that there should be a list of service providers compiled allowing the SME's to choose quickly the service provider they feel most comfortable working within the knowledge area needed.
- One comment by Hungary was that a lesson they had learned was that the list of service providers should not be limited to public organisations as they have found it just does not work very well.

2. The second sub-theme that was addressed was the VAT tax issue that Rafal provided.

- Rafal thought that it might be best to order an adequate institution to prepare an expert opinion on the matter.
- It was commented by Norbert that perhaps working hrs could be included here and that would not go against state aid rules, but further examination was needed.
- Mark also commented that his region also faced similar problems with state aid rules on using innovation environments that were established using EU Funds and as long as these individual innovation environments do not surpass the 100,000€ a year exemption limit they can operate within State Aid rules.
- It was also our hopes that this could be addressed by the Experts in our meeting with them in Brussels.

3. The third sub-theme that was addressed was the Assessment of who is giving the vouchers and can ESF funds be used to train the organisation responsible that Nikos provided.

- It was discussed that a split system with 2 organisations handling the voucher system would increase the time required to deliver the innovation vouchers to the SME's.
- It was agreed that there should be one body handling the innovation vouchers and it should be an organisation that is closest to the SME's perhaps like a Regional Development Agency or other body that has an existing relationship with regional businesses so the element of trust is already established.
- It was also discussed that the organisation should at least be semi-public body as there were concerns of oversight and transparency if the power of selection of SME's and service providers along with quality checks are controlled by a private consulting firm.
- The funding from the ESF would be used to train the responsible organisation on how to implement the voucher system and run it.

4. The Fourth sub-theme that was addressed was the Marketing of Innovation vouchers that Milan provided.

- For Presov it was felt that the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) was the best solution for marketing. However, for the other regions commented that the EEN was not well established in their regions or that it was a faceless or remote EU organisation that regional SME's were not interested to participate in.
- It was also thought that perhaps as in the assessment of the innovation vouchers that the best organisation to do the marketing should be the organization that is closest to the SME's for trust and ease of constant contact as it was commented that marketing the innovation voucher system takes a lot more than brochures SME's do not understand the system so there is a need for face-to-face meetings to explain how to the innovation voucher process works.
- It was said that the EEN network might be of great usefulness to local service providers as they could join the events to market their services to other large companies who seem to be present in the network.

5. The Fifth sub-theme that was addressed was the Indicators for Innovation vouchers that Norbert provided.

- It was commented that in regards to the list of indicators being too long to show a positive impact of the voucher system that it may show the real impact of the innovation voucher system so their effect can be truly measured.
- One additional indicator was added as well, what was the number of international contacts generated?
- Norbert commented that the list of indicators is not something that is provided every year but it is possible that over the five year period that the SME's are asked to provide the answers to the indicators. It was thought that for some regions would like to have this information on a yearly basis.
- There was also a talk that perhaps not all these indicators held the same level of importance and that they could be ranked and then put into a grouping according to a priority level. 1st 2nd or 3rd level of importance for instance.
- The discussion moved to the price levels and themes of the funding. It was clarified that the funding was open to all ideas and that they could move from one step to the next the max amount being 120,000€ for product development, allowing SME's to buy more expensive services. The large monetary amount for product development is unconventional

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compared to other EU member states who's allocation amounts for that purpose are much less.

- It was discussed that a panel of experts take too much time to give a decision and there is only an in house administrator who does the evaluation and conveys the results quickly to the SME's.
- Norbert agreed to send a further break down of their evaluation criteria under the 4 main evaluation points.

6. The Sixth sub-theme that was addressed was the Cross Border Innovation vouchers that Jukka and Mark provided.

- It was discussed that it was rather hard to find information regarding Cross Border vouchers but the only real findings was that they should be a part of any innovation voucher system as sometimes the remoteness of a region means a service provider located across an external border might be closer.
- However, it was mentioned that there is no real solution to 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. This was agreed would be a good question for the experts at our Brussels meeting as it was believed that the Netherlands had some experience with cross Border vouchers. It was also a desire to get form the experts where information can be found regarding the Cross border vouchers as the information available is scarce at best.

7. The Seventh sub-theme that was addressed was the financial structure or cash flow of Innovation vouchers that Jukka and Mark provided.

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

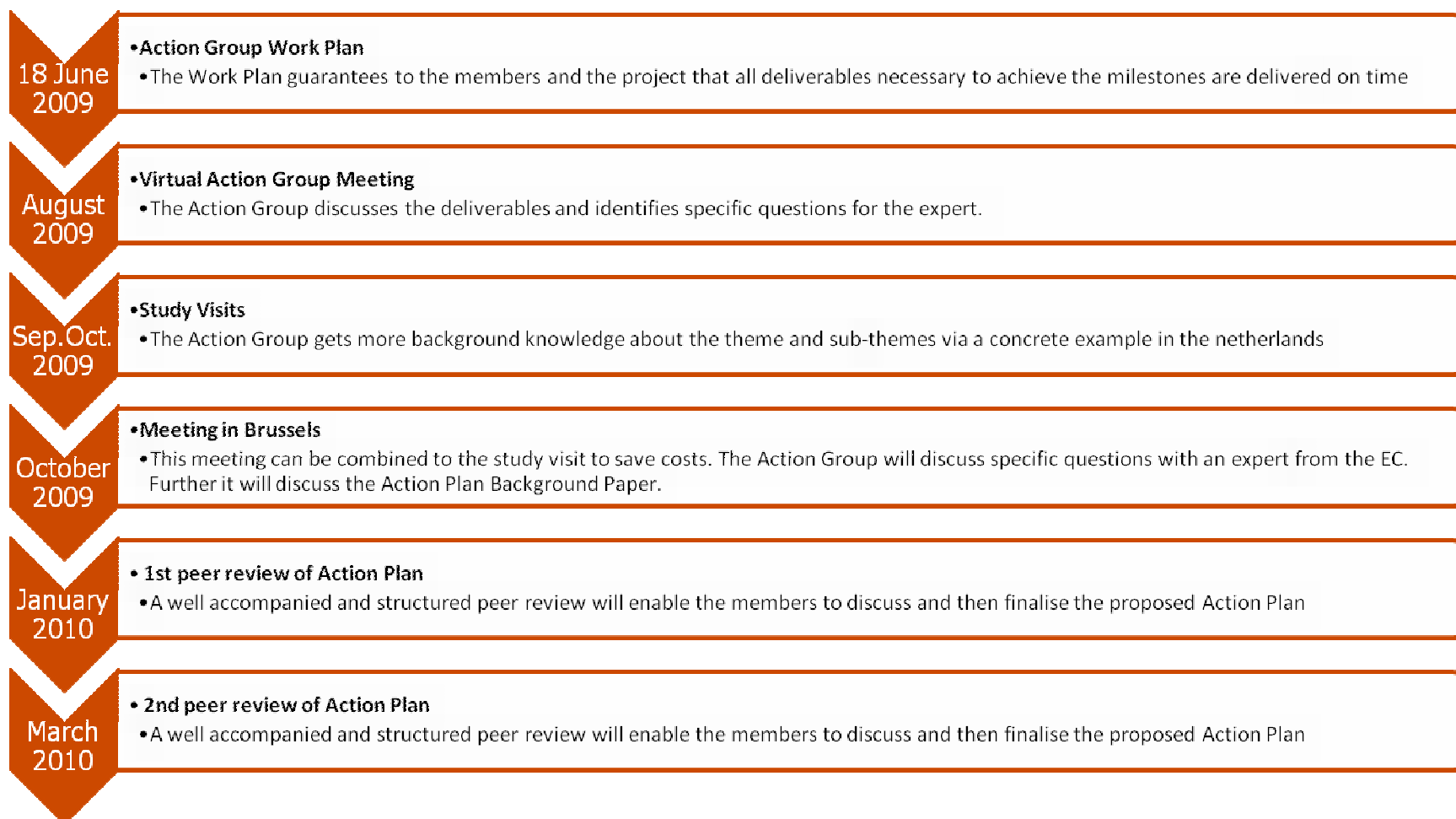
Questions for Brussels

1. There is no real solution to 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. This was agreed would be a good question for the experts at our Brussels meeting as it was believed that the Netherlands had some experience with cross Border vouchers. It was also a desire to get from the experts where information can be found regarding the Cross border vouchers as the information available is scarce at best.
2. the VAT tax issue
3. 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?

Actions to Undertake before Brussels

1. Questions for the experts in Brussels should be submitted by the 15th of September in order for Benjamin to provide the questions to the experts.
2. The work on our Action plan background papers should also be well under way as that work may provide us with many questions for the experts in Brussels.

List of the Action Group milestones



RAPIDE – Work Plan for Innovation Voucher															
Who	Jun-09	Jul-09	Aug-09	Sep-09	Oct-09	Nov-09	Dec-09	Jan-10	Feb-10	Mar-10	Apr-10	May-10	Jun-10	Jul-10	Aug-10
Regional Partner	First Action Group meeting; organisation of later meetings		Drafting of RAP Background paper	Drafting of RAP Background paper	<u>Selection of funding programmes in the region which can be influenced by the AP RAP Background paper</u>	Evaluation of RAP Background paper by regional stakeholders Action group meetings	<u>First Draft of RAP</u>	1st peer review within the Action Group minutes to the Project team	Elaboration of RAP	2nd peer review within the Action Group minutes to the Project team	Elaboration of RAP	<u>Final Draft of RAP</u>	Presentation of RAP at final conference	<u>Final RAP Into Action Plan</u>	Start implementation of RAP, Report to PT
Action Group	<u>Action Group Work Plan</u> Minutes of the Action Group meeting		Preparation of Sub-themes Virtual Action group meeting	Action group meeting Minutes of the Action Group meeting	Study Visit Action Group meeting Minutes of study visit			Peer review report		Peer review report					
Project Team								<u>Summarising the peer reviews</u>	Organising feedback from the FTC	<u>Summarising the peer reviews</u>	Organising feedback from the FTC	Organising feedback from the FTC			<u>Summary of all RAP</u>
Fast Track Committee								Participation in some peer reviews, Comments on the 1st draft of the AP	<u>Comments on the AP</u>	Participation in some peer reviews or naming of experts	<u>Comments on the AP</u>	Comments on the AP	Participation at final conference		
Regional Stakeholders	Ongoing meetings with regional project partner	Validation of transferable practices by regional stakeholders	Ongoing meetings with regional project partner	Ongoing meetings with regional project partner	Ongoing meetings with regional project partner	<u>Evaluation of RAP Background paper by regional stakeholders</u>	<u>Commitment of stakeholders to implement the suggestions of the RAP</u>	Comments on the 1st draft of the AP	Ongoing meetings with regional project partner	Comments on the 2nd draft of the AP	Ongoing meetings with regional project partner	Ongoing meetings with regional project partner		<u>Necessary decision by regional stakeholders and MA</u>	Start implementation of RAP

Red and bold boxes are peer reviews

Yellow and underlined boxes are deliverables