Interreg

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DA-SPACE

Output
4.2 Lab

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Introduction

This document reports the relevant aspects/lessons learned raised by the project taking in consideration how DA-SPACE Open Innovation lab contributed to develop formal and informal innovative learning system for local business and public authority and young talents.
The experience made by all partners involved in the projects and the activities they run at local and transnational level are the basis of this document. To integrate all the inputs and lessons learned, we adopted a detailed but aggregate approach going through the main aspects of the Open Innovation Lab.
Final scope of this Output is to transfer the experience we had in running the lab, the impact DA-SPACE generated and especially the lessons learned we got.

The open innovation approach tested within the DA-SPACE labs clearly contribute to reach two project specific objectives: raising entrepreneurial skills and developing innovative learning system for local business and students. Within each lab cycles, students and employees (mentors) will learn from real business cases through a learning by doing approach and will be stimulated to think and act as entrepreneurs. The lab constitutes in that respect per se an innovative learning system.

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Open Innovation Lab and Lesson Learned

The Interreg DA-SPACE Project built in different countries (Germany, Romania, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Croatia, Serbia and Bulgaria) 7 open innovation labs and correlated ecosystem, offered two round of Open Innovation Process and Entrepreneurship Trainings and raised awareness on Public Private cooperation. Main output of the DA-SPACE Project is the initiation of open innovation lab which generated co-creation process amongst seekers (representative of Public Authorities, SMEs, Business Support Organization and Univesities) and solvers (young talents) with the goal to create solutions to a specific challenge.

Based on DA-SPACE experience, to achieve these goals three main actions have to be put in place. For each of them, the relevant lessons learned are also reported.
For each of the below aspects, the role of the lab manager is highly strategic as he/she is the one in charge for all steps of the Open Innovation Process. The appointment of this role is the first step to do in setting up an Lab following the DA-SPACE approach.

1) Have a physical space.
   This aspect has not to be underestimated. The DA-SPACE labs were not just fancy location but functional spaces where the young talents came together, built up their team/solution, met the mentors and spend time in testing, making mistakes, pivoting, and improving the idea and so on.
   Next to this, the lab represented also a space where internet connection, materials and tools were made available to the lab participants. These tools, such as for example 3D printing, laser cut or all materials needed for a brainstorming session (markers, post, papier, whiteboard) or

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prototyping sessions (see below one run with Lego bricks and pieces) helped to support and stimulate the creativity of the people involved in the process.

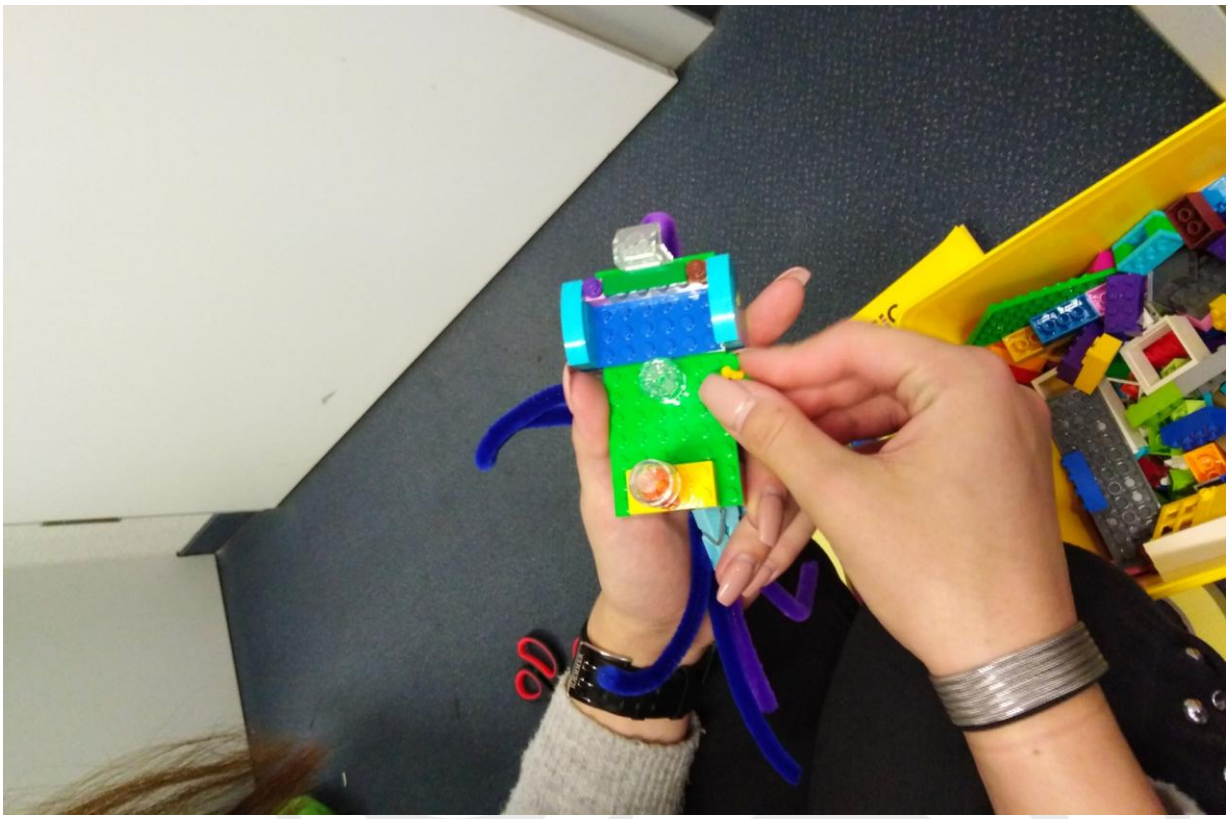

Figure 1 - Propotype Session @ DA-SPACE Lab in Germany

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In the case of DA-SPACE the physical open innovation lab helped also to strongly aggregate the local stakeholders (including seekers and mentors) which were at different stage involved in the process or interested in it (see Point 3).

Lessons Learned about the Physical Space: *The Lab needs to be located in an easy to reach location (city center or central building of the university), should be ideally available all day long (especially at the time out of the working/lessons hours), well equipped (tools and material) and should be managed by someone in charge for every aspects (in our case the Lab Manager).To generate more flow, several project partners organized the Entrepreneurship Training (see Output 5.1 Entrepreneurship Training) in the space using tools and materials made available by the project.*

Next to this, the Open approach should also be reflected in the "entrance policy". In several cases, the lab was open to "other people" not directly involved in DA-SPACE with the final scope to raise project´s awareness and to increase the interest for DA-SPACE´s actions and Open Innovation. The local Lab Manager was in charge to show the facilities to those "other people" and explain the DA-SPACE process allowing them to use the location (for some meeting) but no materials. This approach generated more impact on awareness about the Labs and eventually more participants for the following round.

Finally, we notice that, the spaces built in decentralized area, with low or no equipment at all and unclear opening time with no smoothly integration with the Training were less used.

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2) Establish the role and frame of the Open Innovation Process

The Open innovation process is the backbone of the Lab. Without a clear framework and roles, no relevant results can be expected. In defining the process, within DA-SPACE, we never put aside our main goal/objectives. Thus, in building it we focus on creating something, which could generate collaboration amongst different stakeholders and informal innovative learning system for the people involved. Next to this, we also took in consideration the opinion of the seekers (mainly industry players) which were interested both in the learning aspect but also in the business one. They committed their time to experience in a safe ecosystem basic process of Open Innovation with the final scope to integrate them in their daily business (see more in the Output 4.3 Mentoring Scheme).

Starting from these three main goals, we develop tested and integrated an Open Innovation Process, which was mainly managed by one or more Lab Managers appointed by the project partners. The Lab managers were experienced people with knowledge and competences on Open Innovation and facilitation technics, which run and monitored all passage of the process. The role of the Lab manager is a crucial one both for the physical space (see point above) and the co-creation process.

The approach[1] (as showed in the graph below) we adopted put at the center of the process the young talents, which received support from all actors to go smoothly thought the DA-SPACE journey. In parallel to the Co-creation Process, DA-SPACE offered also the Entrepreneurship Training, which is presented in Output 5.1.

[1] The step-by-step setting up process is described in the Report 3.2.1 Guidelines.

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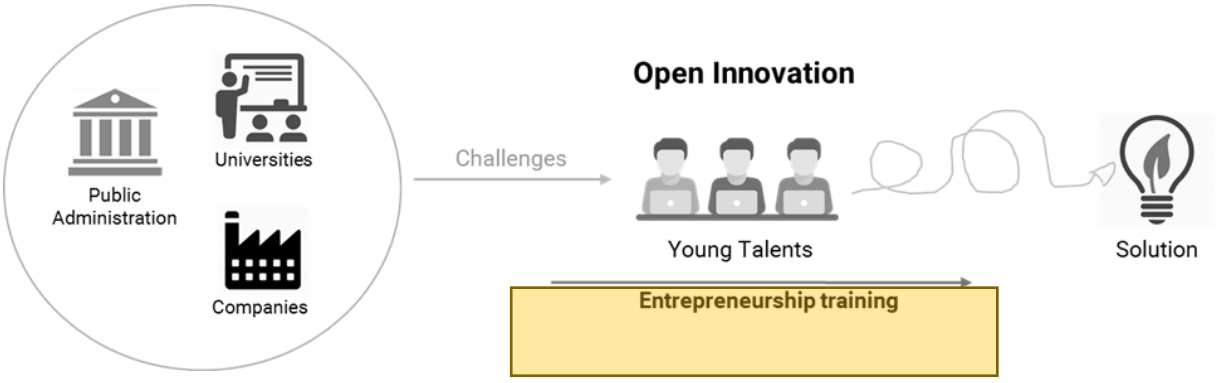

Figure 2- DA-SPACE Open Innovation Process (including the Entrepreneurship Training)

Next to the Lab manager, we identify and support two other categories/roles within the Da-SPACE Open Innovation process:

-) Seekers (representative of Public Administration, Universities, Companies or Business Support Organization) which proposed some challenges/problem to be discussed and solved within the process;

-) Solvers (young talents) which in team worked on a possible solution to the challenge proposed.

Within this journey, the project partners (via the role of the Lab Manager) supported the young talents in developing the solutions, facilitate sometimes meeting with the mentors and monitored all the actions.

In two rounds of action in 7 different country, DA-SPACE promoted 109 Co- Creation Projects[2] (solutions provided by different teams to specific Challenges). The Co-Creation Projects refer to different sectors (such as for example ICT, Marketing, Internet of the Things, Improvement of Production process, Creative solution for Tourism etc) and have been generally developed in a time frame of maximum 5 months. Having access to the Lab, finding a room for creativity to stimulate cooperation and co-creation process, taking advantages by the Entrepreneurship Training allowed the young talents to define the frame for developing the

[2] The co-creation projects are presented in Output 4.2

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solutions. Next to these the young talents have been exposed to mentors and business cases boosting a learning by doing process guided by experienced people

Finally, a special effort has been given to define the IPR strategy of DA-SPACE. Within the Lab, the general approach was to leave the rights of the solution in the hand of the team. In some cases (such as Slovakia, due to local needs) this could have been managed differently in agreement with all the parties involved.

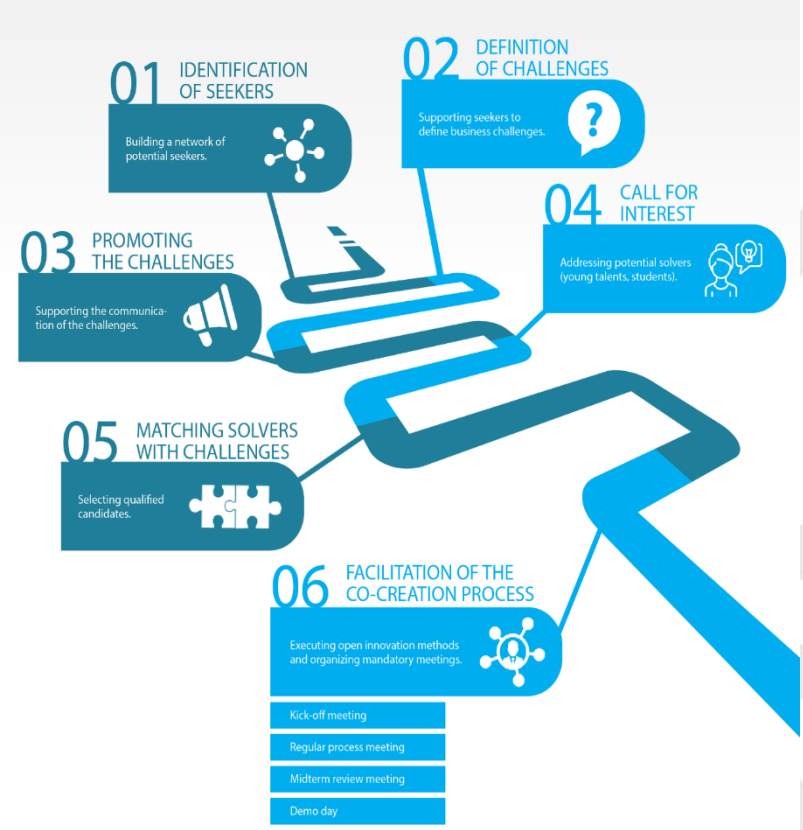

Figure 3 - Detailed steps within the DA-SPACE Open Innovation Process

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Lessons Learned about the Open Innovation Process: *Building the DA-SPACE Process, we support more than 500 people (among them 440 young talents) in getting to know about entrepreneurship topic, in establish close collaboration amongst different stakeholders, in experiencing* ***informal innovative learning system*** *and in* ***testing*** *in a safe ecosystem* ***Open Innovation methods****. The young talents got closer to real business cases and work on concrete challenges being expose to companies and institutions could play a relevant role in their professional life. We are aware about the fact that several students were hired for internship or junior position by the companies (seekers) promoted the challenges those students were working on as solvers. Next to the networking opportunity, developing a Co-Creation Project within the process gave the young talents some knowledge on which are the steps to take in consideration in generating, evaluating, and put in place a real business idea. To give an example only in Romania we registered 6 solvers who decided to explore the start-up journey and opened business in ICT, 3D Printing and HR. This combined approach (working on real cases and learning by doing) has been appreciated by the young talents, which took part to the informal learning system.*

Another relevant lessons learned we registered is the ***flexibility****. We adopted general framework (described above) with regard to duration, sector focus and facilitation process. Each lab then fine-tuned the approach and the offer to meet better the expectation of the local target groups. In this phase, we took in consideration the output of the regional analysis DA-SPACE partner run at the beginning of the process. Additionally, learning from the Lean Start-up Methodology we also adopted a lean approach, which allow us to make a pivoting from the first to the second round reducing the amount of paper for reporting and raising the time to invest in share quality feedback amongst peer (young talents) and other categories (mentors and project partners).*

Another innovation was the introduction of ***site visiting*** *for the team of young talents to the companies' premises. This was interesting especially in the cases of challenges addressing production line or innovation in business process. The*

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site visiting has been proposed by some active seekers from the first round and has been introduced as additional session of the Co-creation process form round two.
Finally, in running this type of process is of high importance the "expectation of needs" of each actors involved. Especially in the preparation of the first round, we faced some drop out from actors (mainly business players) which expected as results of the co-creation process final production or final solution (to bring soon into the market). We pointed out and clarify better in our communication approach the real scope of the process (increase knowledge about the co-creation model and raise entrepreneurs skills instead of generate final production). Clarify the expectation helped in the relations and commitment each stakeholders made available in the lab.

To transfer the knowledge to additional institutions and regions (activity 6.2) we came out with a list of "golden" rules to take in consideration in building an Open Innovation process, which shows how trust, motivation and commitment of all partners involved is a strategic pillar of it.

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Figure 4 -Lessons Learnerd - Part 1

Figure 5 - Lessons Learned -Part 2

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3) Build on a reliable ecosystem which support the lab activities in the long term

In most of the regions involved in the project, a tandem of partner with specific competences has been built in order to have on site experts able to run the process and establish a fruitful cooperation amongst the members. In some cases, such as Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria, we had a University (experience in Entrepreneurship Topic and strong relation with young talents) working in tandem with a Cluster or Business Organization (experience in Open Innovation and strong connection with industry sectors and potential seekers). In other regions (such as Germany and Croatia) we had also the Policy makers as part of the process to integrate social issues and challenges in the Open Innovation Process. In the region with a single "official partner" the missing experience and competences have been covered by external stakeholders involved in the Lab too.

Figure 6 - International DA-SPACE Ecosystem

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The Lab Manager is the person in charge for build and maintain the relationship with all other actors of the ecosystem. Those could be the seekers (such as Universities, Companies, Public Authority and Business Support Organization) involved directly in the open innovation process or other stakeholders that can support the Open Innovation Process. Those could be experts running inspirational sessions, institutions that make available funding or opportunities for the young talents and their projects or universities, which can integrate part of the Open Innovation Process in their curricula.

Lessons Learned about the Ecosystem: *The ecosystem is the virtual environment necessary to build at the beginning a pilot version of the lab and later on a sustainable version of it. Within DA-SPACE in some cases external experts from the local or international ecosystem have been asked to support the team on a specific issues (such as Agile, prototyping technics etc) if this could not be provided by the project partners. With a strong ecosystem on the back, the lab manager can be aware of demand and offer raised within the lab and match the stakeholders and young talents with the final scope to raise innovation in the region. Everyone showed interest about the Open Innovation topic, almost all of them wanted to be part of it..but when the real commitment needed to be showed, in some cases we registered a lack of interest. The main challenge in building the ecosystem to win a real and reliable commitment by all stakeholders involved. Based on DA-SPACE experience, the best way to avoid lack of interest within the process is to clarify since the beginning roles and average amount of time they might have to invest. In exchange of their commitment, next to access to young talents we also gave them visibility presenting in our communication materials and message those stakeholders as the most innovative ones supporting the local Open Innovation Lab.*

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Additional Issues

Above we highlighted the steps needed to be taken in account in building an open innovation lab and the lessons learned we gained based on the experience within DA-SPACE.
Of course, not everything worked always in the way we planed and expected. The following issues are the ones that mostly have been registered in the 7 Open Innovation labs during the 2 round of action (and have not been mentioned yet in the previous part of the document)

- ***Lack of Multidisciplinary team:*** Ideally, each young talents, part of the team, should have different background. In some situation this was not the cases as the young talents joined a team had similar competences or in some other cases relevant knowledge (such as informatics, or technical ones) were missing. The lab manager managed the situation supporting those team in identified their needs of support outside the team (via external experts, the lab managers or project partners).

- ***Passive Behavior:*** This challenged touched all stakeholders' involved (young talents, solvers, mentors and member of the ecosystem) in the Open Innovation lab, one solution we tested having better response is trust and confidence. The lab manager aimed to build personal and trust relationship with all stakeholders involved, having the confidence to "press" the person being more active. The Trust is a relevant element if we also consider the fear some institutions had to open their door to the consortium and young talents in discussing possible challenges and problem they were facing in the day-to-day business. Building trust, in some cases avoid or reduced these stuck situation.

- ***Lack of time (seekers and solvers):*** In some situation, even if the commitment was given and the interest was high, some players (from

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both sides seekers and solvers) suffer of lack of time especially in the time close to exams (for solvers) or specific deadline (for solvers). For example, some meeting might have been postponed and the team could not move on the challenges (due to need of clarification by the mentor etc). in those cases, the lab manager needed to propose a solution (for example providing new slot for meeting) or in urgent cases jump in giving suggestion and indication to the team. The flexibility, already mentioned above, is again relevant to be used for problem solving cases.

- ***Misleading about role and outputs:*** Expectation is a double-edge-sword. Building high expectation could generate on the short-term high interest but also high dissatisfaction on the long one. We faced some cases of seekers willing to be part of the process to understand better Open Innovation methods, to learn about entrepreneurship and to get an almost final product/solution for their challenges without investing time or other form of support. Without a clear communication, the misleading about the role and the output could have generated higher displeased among the actors involved. As soon as some of unhappy signals were showed, the lab managers had bilateral meeting to clarify the issues and bring back the situation to the usual level. Here the Lab manager has to show sensibility and attention to the "feeling" and behavior each actors has to avoid bigger dissatisfaction and lower quality results.

- ***Lack of response by the ecosystem (first round):*** it takes a lot of time to communicate a message to different target groups in different regions. Even if we plan plenty of time to sensitize the stakeholders, probably the topic Open Innovation (especially within specific target group such as Public authorities and traditional SMEs from some countries) was still not a familiar one. For this reason, we invested much more effort than planned in marketing actions and bi-lateral meeting to win the first commitment. This situation has been faced in most of the regions

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involved especially for the preparation of the first round. This skepticism went away after the first round, as we could showoff the results and solution proposed by the first team during the local and international demo day.

Conclusion

This documents aimed to showed how the Open Innovation Process built in DA-SPACE raised awareness on entrepreneurship topic and has been considered as an innovative informal learning system for having involved real business cases promoted by public and private institution. The process has been showed including the relevant aspects and the lessons learned we got in the last 3 years of actions. The challenges to be taken in account to develop an Open Innovation process have been also reported.

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