**Regional R&I Ecosystems: contributing to a competitive Europe
POMORSKIE REGION CONTRIBUTION

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**Key challenges related to the creation of the Pomorskie innovation ecosystem:**

* building trust and a good climate for cooperation, a culture of openness and acceptance to risk
* creating permanent foundations for implementing innovations in the long term, including human and financial capital (basing on existing potentials and advantages)
* change in the mentality of regional partners, including companies leaders and universities personnel, R&D institutions who had no previous experience in implementing innovations
* enabling leaders willing to implement R&D projects to have wide access to various financial sources (subsidies, repayable loans and capital inputs) and strive for independence from EU funding sources (emphasis on the equity of companies)
* the use of strong regional potentials resulting from its location, as well as the involvement of regional key clusters to gain competitive advantages
* creating a system covering the regional labour market, aimed at flexibility to adapt new competences to the needs of employers in connection with the implementation of smart specializations (smart specialisations as hybrids! mix of several branches)
* being "two steps ahead" means observing trends and global economies, emerging industries (value chains, competitive gaps)
* self-education of companies in terms of internationalization (tools for positioning products and services)
* broadening the knowledge of administration regarding the management of smart specializations.

**How did you manage these challenges?**

* launching a long-term but consequent entrepreneurial discovery process consisting of bottom-up approach and creating partnerships for smart specializations including all interested partners (with particular focus on clusters), selection of 4 Pomorskie Smart Specialization (maritime, ICT, energy and health)
* establishing communication and cooperation platforms focused around smart specializations in order to enable efficient communication, exchange of experiences and good practices (Councils of smart specializations are the main partner for regional self-government in making decisions regarding broadly understood innovation system)
* animating and initiating cooperation, including assistance in the creation of specific projects, consortia’s or incubators/ accelerators, industry hubs
* creating a *proof-of-concept* mechanism with the aim to unburden from companies some of the risk related to making decisions about starting a research project
* creating a complementary, wide range of co-financing R&D projects with the involvement of Pomeranian funding entities such as: Pomeranian Development Fund (managing funds from JEREMIE), Pomeranian Loan Fund (offering loans for innovations), newly created capital funds and angels business
* observation of trends on the labour market related to new competences in cooperation with the Regional Labour Office and launching activities for "tailor-made" vocational education for the needs of employers
* implementation of the OECD project on emerging industries and creation of a mechanism for fast development of niche by Pomeranian companies (access to knowledge and experts at the global level and benchmarks from given fields)
* preparation of practical tools for companies related to internationalization within Ami List Expert (EC initiative) and exchange of experiences between regions as part of a peer-to-peer initiative
* participation in the international workshops on the management of smart specializations (3SPlatform)

**Recommendation:**

There is a need to strengthen the competences of regions in improving the outcomes of the innovation ecosystems that have been created (for example through the implementation of pilot projects), so as not to ruin the existing results and the engagement of partners. The competences are needed in:

* enabling professional animation of the innovation environment, i.e. expert support for consortia’s and partnerships, not only at the stage of their formation (what was implemented by regional authorities), but mainly at their development and improvement starting from mentoring and incubating potential research projects with implementation profile, building implementation partnerships for such projects, preparation of the model of internationalization and commercialization
* strengthening activities related to the internationalization of companies, in particular: assessment of barriers to entry into international markets, technological trends, international value chains, niches on international markets together with a medium-term development plan for a given area
* supporting the creation of start-ups initiating innovative ideas and groundbreaking experiences.

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