

EURADA-NEWS
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EURADA NEWS

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ICT VOUCHER SCHEMES

This issue of Eurada-News presents the results of the dialogue day organised on 15 May 2013 with DG CONNECT on the experience of selected EURADA members on ICT voucher schemes.

The presentations made during the meeting are available on the EURADA website → Members Area → Presentations resource center <http://tinyurl.com/nwhq33o>

You will find below a snapshot of the answers to the preparatory questionnaire with a first set of ideas concerning eligible support for an ICT voucher scheme (still in discussion at DG CONNECT).

Dialogue Day with DG CONNECT: Template analysis

(by Christian SAUBLENS)

9 templates were received:

- Baden-Württemberg (DE)
- Flanders (BE)
- Jyväskylä (FI)
- Midtjylland (DK)
- Murcia (ES)
- Northern Ireland (UK)
- Ostrava (CZ)
- Scotland (UK)
- South Moravia

1. Key elements of the regional ICT strategy

Baden-Württemberg:

- Embedded systems and IT services
- Cloud
- Big data analysis
- Efficient software engineering
- Certification
- Software quality
- Internet of things

Flanders:

- Voucher scheme
- SME e-wallet

Jyväskylä:

- Cluster
- Security (Living Lab)
- Game industry

Midtjylland:

- iKraft - using ICT accumulated knowledge in hubs

Northern Ireland:

- e-commerce
- increased private investment in ICT
- capability of SMEs to use appropriate ICT solutions

Ostrava & Murcia:

- ICT generic issue for the regional strategy

Scotland:

- Scotland Digital Future
- International focus on e-commerce

South Moravia:

- ICT security
- Skills
- Absorption of state of the art technologies by enterprises.

2. Types of support services provided to SMEs

- Platform to develop and test prototypes and business ideas
- Incubation
- Advice to improve ICT management in enterprises
- Enhancing capability and capability building
- Support to start-ups
- Innovation vouchers
- Access to funding
- Coaching and mentoring
- Networking
- Internationalisation
- Subsidies for advice and training
- Support obtained when purchasing external services by approved suppliers (training, advice, technology watch, advice on internationalisation, strategic advice and coaching).
- Skills and education
- Industry campus for SMEs

3. Voucher schemes

All 9 regions implement voucher schemes. Only four have a dedicated ICT voucher scheme.

Baden-Württemberg:

- YES: 2500 - 20 000 €
- YES ICT specific vouchers, maximum 20 000 €

Flanders:

- YES
- YES ICT specific vouchers, 2500 - 25 000 €

Jyväskylä:

- YES: 2500 - 15 000 €
- NO ICT specific vouchers

Midtjylland:

- YES: 2600 - 6000 €
- YES ICT specific vouchers

Murcia:

- YES: maximum 5100 €
- NO ICT specific vouchers but strong demand for ICT

Northern Ireland:

- YES: maximum 4000 £ (± 4800 €)
- YES ICT specific vouchers

Ostrava:

- YES: maximum 16 000 €
- NO ICT specific vouchers

Scotland:

- YES: 1 - 5000 £ (± 1200 - 6000 €)
- NO ICT specific vouchers

South Moravia:

- YES: maximum 4000 € (75 %)
- NO ICT specific vouchers

4. Lessons drawn

- Quick decisions, simple process, no bureaucracy (agile administration)
- Interesting leverage effect: 1CZK invested - 5 CZK return
- Working in a network in order to assess knowledge of enterprises & providers
- Ensure quality of the results
- Local demand for local suppliers (no request for suppliers outside the region) (Murcia & Baden-Württemberg)
- Impartial advice from the supplier
- Small amount is OK
- Role model: case studies encourage SMEs to go for it
- No support for standard products
- Follow-up effects ⇒ voucher is not an objective per se especially if 100 % funded
- Diligence to ensure that companies are robust (to get an impact)
- 7 stages process (Midtjylland)
- Solve real technical problems
- Increase the impact of national applied research programmes
- Vouchers used for product diversification
- Offering a wide range of support
- Well defined eligible costs
- Vouchers tailored for 6 different issues: training, advice, technology watch, advice on internationalisation, strategic advice, coaching

5. Speed up commercialisation of research results

Baden-Württemberg:

- Vouchers

Jyväskylä:

- Commercialisation clinic
- Idea coffee shop
- Training courses

Murcia:

- Spin-off
- Clusters as accelerator

Northern Ireland:

- Start-up support

- IPR management

Ostrava:

- Entrepreneurship for the valorisation of results

Scotland:

- Follow-up voucher scheme: co-funding in cash by the beneficiary:
5000 - 20 000 £ (± 6000 - 23 500 €)

South Moravia:

- Vouchers
- Accelerators

6. ICT interest group

5 out of 6 results: enthusiasm

Medium interest: 3

No reply: 1

Yes to the 4 propositions made

7. Value of the propositions (4 answers)

- Infodays: Medium 5 / High 3 / No reply 1
- Second chance financing: Medium 5 / High 3
- Exchanging practices: Medium 1 / High 8
- Brokerage events: Medium 2 / High 6 / Low 1

8. Holding a brokerage event

Yes: 5

Maybe: 2 - Jyväskylä & Scottish Enterprise

No: 1

9. Introducing a pilot ICT voucher scheme

- Baden-Württemberg: yes
- Flanders: yes
- Jyväskylä: why not
- Midtjylland: yes
- Murcia: yes and already under consideration
- Northern Ireland: yes
- Ostrava: yes
- Scotland: yes
- South Moravia: yes

Brainstorming on Eligible ICT services

Eligible services discussed in three different discussion groups:

- services for No web and Low web SMEs;
- Services for Medium web SMEs;
- Services for High web SMEs.

1. No web – Low web: Potential eligible Services:

i. *Auditing 2.0*

Helping SMEs to articulate their problem through a so-called XXI century auditing. The main aim is to raise awareness of No/Low web SMEs about possible ways of ICT applications that can be helpful for their business.

ii. *Basic Digital business skills*

Fund ICT services related to the use of basic ICT applications to business process (for instance Microsoft Excel training, LinkedIn, social media, etc.). The aim is to enable No/Low web SMEs to exploit the benefits of basic ICT applications to their business activities.

iii. *Commerce related services*

Help low web SMEs in getting in contacts to their customers through ICT applications, (including for local market in order to overcome the "invisibility of services/business"). An issue raised in the discussion concerns the promotion of the new services implemented by SMEs in regions and areas characterised by low ICT diffusion. This could be possibly done through traditional means of communication.

2. Medium web:

What is a Medium web SME:

- PCs in place for most employees
- Basic web presence (static, not updated)
- Basic use of office software

The services targeting this group should aim at increasing working efficiency (including value chain), create new products, innovation and provide access to new markets/clients (in order words elaborate strategic objective for growth).

Potential eligible services:

i. *Digital Auditing*

Offer a quick and easy questionnaire/self-assessment/on-line digital survey (the possibility of exploiting DG ENTR e-commerce readiness tool should be explored).

ii. *Improving web presence*

Services in this category can range from migration from static to dynamic, multilingual content to mobile web and ecommerce platform (selling, booking etc.).

iii. *Improving work efficiency*

Services in this category can range from customer relation management (using social media), e-invoicing, e-taxation, intranet for communication (how to manage dispersed staff better, company resources) to e-skills training and value chain management.

All eligible services should be complemented (most importantly) with training and support services.

3. High web: Eligible services:

- i. *Application of ICT to new business models*
More in detail: customer services delivery, support for mobility (for services, processes and staff), migration to cloud services, application of "Internet of Things" to services
- ii. *ICT design and development*
More specifically access to processing capacity, application development platform and collaborative tools
- iii. *Investment readiness (also applicable to low and medium web)*
This category should encompass networking services, mentoring, coaching and brokering. In this perspective the role of the SMEs could be transformed in the one of service provider. Further discussion is needed for this point.

Other ICT services could also be considered as eligible:

- use of online analytic tools (i.e. Google analytics);
- implementation of automatic error reporting systems(linked to cyber-security issues),
- prototyping (especially for high web).

4. ICT content start-ups

- i. Proof of concept
- ii. Investment readiness
- iii. First client search
- iv. Internationalisation