



PROJECT NEWSLETTER

Issue 1 - July 2020

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We aim to enhance entrepreneurial lifelong learning opportunities at universities, inspire a new generation of adult job creators in the rural areas and bring the universities and their regional communities closer together.

What is the ARDENT Project

Advancing Rural Development through Entrepreneurship Education for Adults

In the course of this 2-year Erasmus+ project, we aim to develop the following outputs:



RURAL COUNCIL BUILDING TOOL-BOX

A guideline for creating rural councils, unifying the region and enabling cross-institutional collaboration



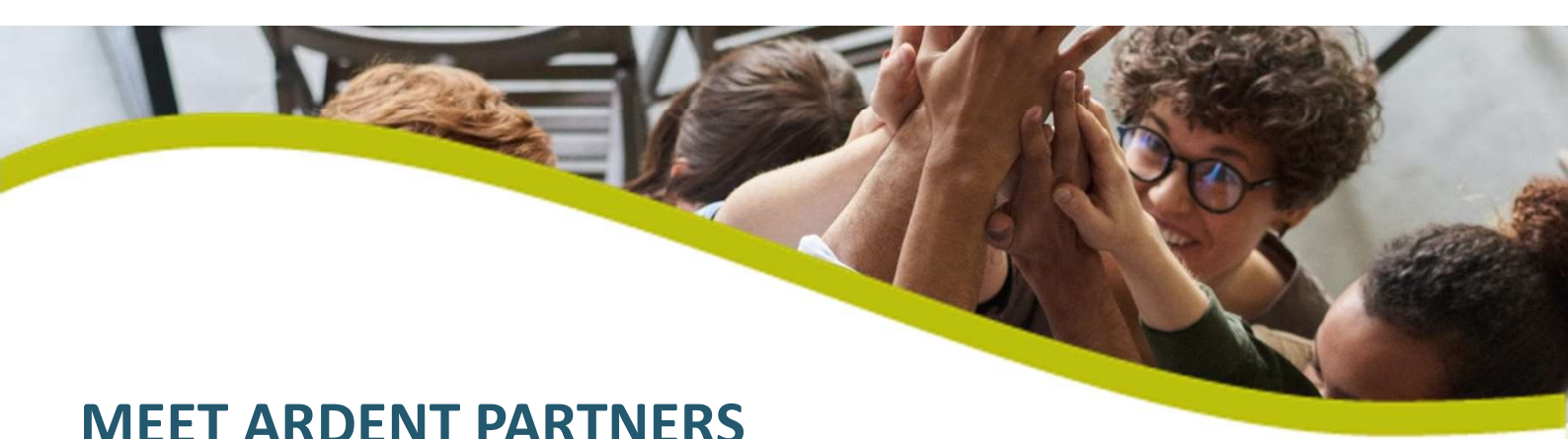
RURAL CONSULTATION ROADMAP & NEEDS ANALYSIS REPORTS

Highlights rural needs and assists in bridging the divide between the HEI and its regional community through regional consultation events that require innovative solutions



RURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP COMMUNITY-BASED LEARNING PACK

The basis for a two-semester training course, which develops relevant entrepreneurial skills through hands-on projects addressing societal and business challenges



MEET ARDENT PARTNERS

Münster University of Applied Sciences
(Germany)



Faculty of Economics in Osijek (EFOS)
(Croatia)



Cracow University of Economics (CUE)
(Poland)



Univations GmbH
(Germany)



The Polytechnic Institute of Viana do Castelo
(Portugal)



The University Industry Innovation Network (UIIN)
(Netherlands)



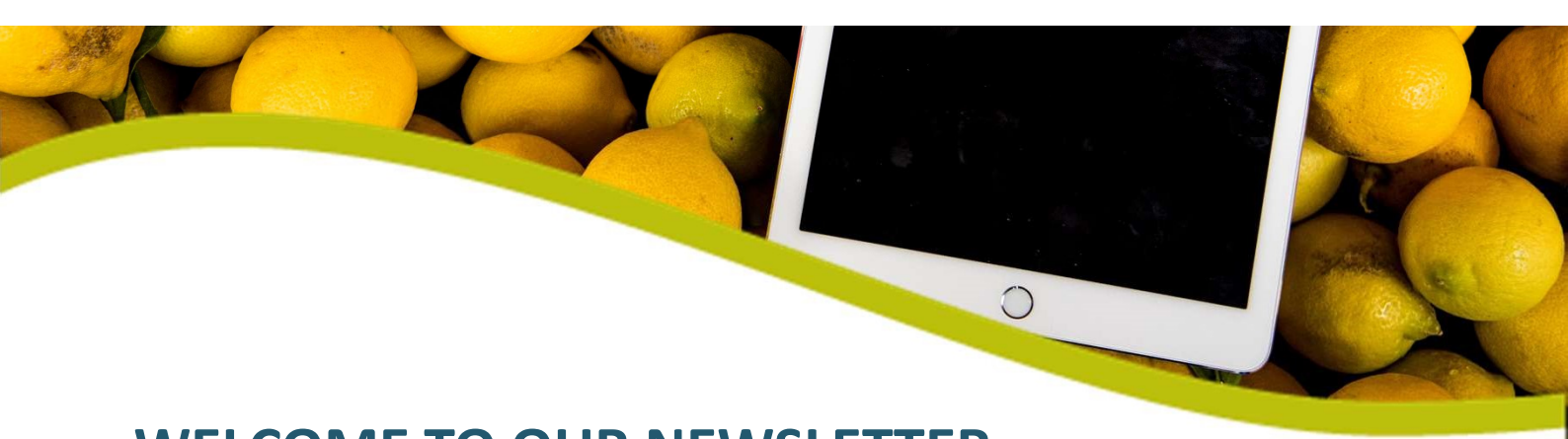
ASSOCIATED PARTNERS

Kompetenzzentrum für Soziale Innovationen
Sachsen-Anhalt (KomZ)



Anhalt University of Applied Sciences





WELCOME TO OUR NEWSLETTER

Entrepreneurship actions which might have an impact on rural communities are embedded in broader agricultural, rural, or structural policies at the European level. Still, there is a general lack of rural strategies focused on entrepreneurship, particularly in ageing and depopulated rural areas. To reach new horizons in pursuit of economic growth and innovation, entrepreneurship needs to be given greater recognition to revitalize rural areas. European education institutions need to ignite an entrepreneurial spirit among adult learners and to integrate them into a process where they need to generate creative solutions to real-life challenges of rural communities.

Our Erasmus+ project “Advancing Rural Development through Entrepreneurship Education for Adults” (ARDENT) has been developed with a clear goal: to unlock the potential of rural entrepreneurship. ARDENT will equip Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) with knowledge and tools to develop an attractive learning offer for adult learners in rural areas by focusing on the development of their entrepreneurial skills.

In this way, the university can engage with society and achieve synergies through lifelong learning in the form of entrepreneurship to promote rural development. These features make ARDENT a unique pan-European pilot initiative with high impact potentials on the transfer of competences from HEIs to the adult communities in rural areas, to seed in them the basis to become job creators and not job seekers.

To keep our audience up-to-date with the developments within the project as well as a wider rural entrepreneurship education landscape, we are happy to present you THE ARDENT newsletter series. The newsletter issues will feature the news from the partnership and highlight relevant articles on the topics of rural entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship/entrepreneurial education, university engagement in rural areas and exceptional examples from the partner regions and beyond.

We hope you enjoy your read of our first ARDENT newsletter!



ARDENT CONSORTIUM



NEWS FROM THE ARDENT PROJECT

In this section you will find the latest news from ARDENT, covering the first Council Meeting (online) in Münster, our Intellectual Output 1: The Rural Community Building Toolbox preview and some stories from our partners in COVID-19 crisis.



FIRST COUNCIL MEETING IN MÜNSTER - ONLINE

The last 20th of May, the Science-to-Business Marketing Research Centre (S2BMRC), as a part of the international consortium of the 'Advancing Rural Development through Entrepreneurship Education for Adults' (ARDENT) project from the European Commission, hosted an online meeting with actors from Münsterland interested in igniting the entrepreneurial spirit among citizens and integrating them into a process where they need to generate creative solutions to real-life challenges of rural communities.

Rural entrepreneurship is much more important today than ever. The overarching idea of ARDENT is to create a momentum for more engagement in the challenges and opportunities faced by rural areas within Münsterland. Further aim driving the implementation of ARDENT is helping adult learners enhance their capabilities and entrepreneurial mindset through a two-semester training course. The course includes hands-on projects addressing societal and business challenges which would in the long run boost their employability chances and revive the economy of the rural areas.

The meeting brought together 13 participants who represented, S2BMRC, the Münster University of Applied Sciences, regional development agencies, supporting organisations, and entrepreneurs. The purpose of this meeting was to gather feedback from our stakeholders regarding the project and to form the rural council. We encountered a very positive response both in terms of the number and variety of participants and the experiences and expectations shared.

It concluded with a strong commitment of all participants to keep the discussion open and participate in subsequent meetings to support entrepreneurship in Münsterland.

S2BMRC invited stakeholders who:

- Have horizontal and vertical **linkages** to **regional, national** and **EU actors and policy makers** in entrepreneurship education and rural development (contribution to dissemination and wider sustainability);
- Are **committed** to approaching problem-solving through multi-stakeholder engagement and co-creation;
- Seek to **boost the attractiveness of rural areas** and stimulate more investment efforts into the rural entrepreneurship ventures.

The participants of the meeting were:

- Münsterland e.V.
- Digital Hub Münsterland
- Tamara Ameling – Entrepreneur
- TAFH Münster
- Entwicklungs- und Wirtschaftsförderung (Gronau, Rheine, Senden).
- Stefanie Unland – Entrepreneur, Connett & Unland GbR
- Initiativkreis Wirtschaft Oelde e.V
- Thomas Baaken – Senior Professor FH Münster & S2BMRC
- Iulia Stroila – ARDENT Project Manager
- Sue Rossano – S2BMRC
- Linn Korte – S2BMRC



MÜNSTERLAND, GERMANY

Size	5129 km ²
Inhabitants	1,63 Mio.
GDP	36.300 €

85,9%	Small companies
82%	Population with access to internet
4,5%	Unemployment rate
78,2	Life expectancy



Tourism

Münsterland is always worth a visit with 1,7 Million tourists in 2018. The Münsterland region is architecturally characterised by many churches, monasteries and castles, some of which are still very well preserved. Due to the relatively flat terrain, especially in the northern and western parts, bicycles are a common means of transport here. There are numerous well-signposted cycle routes, including the 100 Castles Route and the R1 European Cycle Route.



Most important sectors

Mechanical engineering and agriculture are the most prominent sectors.



Research and Development

The R&D expenditure of the companies in Münsterland has been lower than the national average for years. One reason for this is the medium-sized sector structure, in which R&D activities are often owner-driven and not institutionalised in R&D departments.



Entrepreneurship

The propensity to start a company is lower in rural Münsterland than in densely populated regions. This is also due to the current labour market situation. In Münsterland, there were 3.9 start-ups per 1,000 inhabitants aged between 18 and 64 years (NRW: 4.5). Although there are very few start-ups in Münsterland, the probability of success is slightly higher than the state average. In 2015, 41.6 % of the companies founded in 2010 were still active in the market (NRW: 36.4 %).



Research landscape

The science and research landscape in the Münsterland region are shaped by the Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster, the Münster University of Applied Sciences and the Westfälische Hochschule. At these three universities alone, more than 62,000 people study.

ARDENT RURAL COMMUNITY BUILDING TOOLBOX - PREVIEW

ARDENT Rural Community Building Toolbox aims to help you set your rural council. The toolbox facilitates the creation of the conditions and organizational connections that are essential for the processes promoting entrepreneurship in rural areas. It contains a roadmap for a successful rural council creation that consists of 7 steps that you can follow to build a successful council. At each step, you will be provided with some tips and tricks to make your journey easier and to engage your members.

What else is in the toolbox?

In addition to the roadmap, we have developed a set of other valuable materials that you can use to contribute to the fostering of entrepreneurship in rural areas. You can also refer to these materials to support your activities after your council is established.

Who can use this toolbox?

There is a simple answer ... Anyone! Either if you are a researcher, policymaker, an entrepreneur, a representative from the Chamber of Commerce or business promotion and rural development agency or a simple citizen you can use this toolbox.

These 7 steps will guide you from defining and mapping your rural area to holding your first meeting and monitoring your council, helping you to identify potential members and present your offer to them in the way.

Check the first preview of the toolbox at www.ruralentrepreneurs.eu

Define and map
your rural area



List your
potential
members

Put together
your offer



Prepare your
documentation

Send
collaboration
invitations



Hold your
first meeting

Monitor and
evaluate your
council



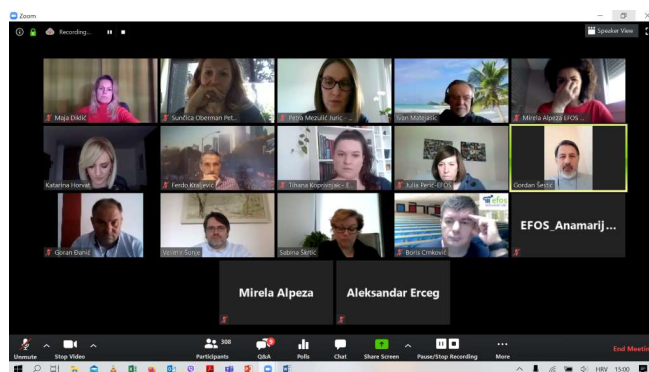
COVID-19: OUR PARTNERS SHARE

EFOS - Doing business during COVID-19 crisis

International Centre for Entrepreneurial Studies (ICES), which holds the title of UNESCO Chair in Entrepreneurship, and Faculty of Economics in Osijek have organized the first online conference Doing business during the COVID-19 crisis on April 23, 2020. In the situation when all small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) had to adapt to the current situation, the team of professors from ICES decided to help with their knowledge and skills and to try filling the gap in the counselling market (none of 447 business support institutions that usually provide counselling support to entrepreneurs do not offer any kind of advice on doing business during the crisis).

The conference attracted more than 300 people, coming from different sectors and companies of different sizes. Although the introduction was purely a macroeconomic explanation of the current situation and the “symptoms” that we all will experience after the lockdown period, the panellists were mostly from SMEs. Panellists have presented how they prepared their companies for the lockdown period and the crisis that will come afterwards. They have shared their experiences and presented their strategic decisions in a small fitness studio, a big sport equipment dealer, an IT company, a nightclub and a natural gas distributor. Although every panellist had a different starting position and response to the crisis challenges, the conclusion was common. All of them have recommended keeping the team (employees) and trying to continue the learning processes. Using on-line tools and social networks to communicate with customers and users of their

services has already helped in keeping the customers or restore some of them. Companies that sell their products through web shops have reported minor losses, since they were able to redirect their sales to online channels. The conclusion at the end of the conference was that crisis is a challenge for every company, but also an opportunity to change, adapt and prepare for the world after the crisis.



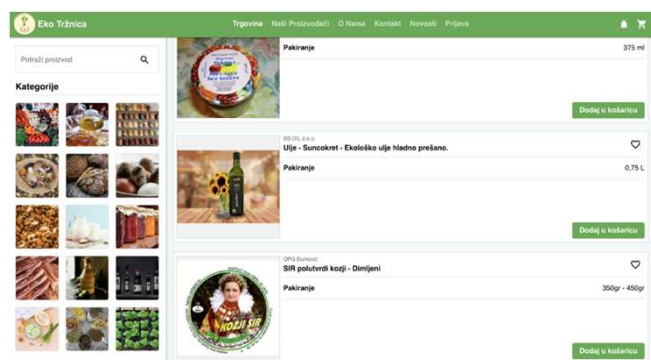
EFOS - Good practice example: Selling agricultural products through social networks

The decision to lockdown all institutions, shops and restaurants in Croatia due to COVID-19 pandemic was literally made over the course of just a few days. The Croatian Civil Protection Directorate recommended some of the strictest measures in Europe, which prohibited, among other things, the work of green markets.

Green markets are the main sales channel for products produced by small agricultural farms in Croatia, and with their closure, small agricultural farms were left without any contact with their customers.

COVID-19: OUR PARTNERS SHARE

This was a particularly hard situation because small agricultural farms counted on higher demand for their products (mainly vegetables) due to the upcoming Easter holiday. Director of the green market in Osijek, Igor Medić, who is also a member of the Croatian Rural Council within the ARDENT project, knew that something had to be done for them in order to ensure their sustainability. He published the names and mobile phone numbers of all the small agricultural producers on the social media, suggesting that customers order vegetables directly from them. Small agricultural farms started taking orders via social media and delivering vegetables and other products to customers' doorsteps (taking into account all the recommendations from the Civil Protection Directorate).



The success of this idea quickly attracted the attention of the media at local and national level. Croatian Ministry of Agriculture also supported the idea and started to work on building a national internet platform that would connect customers with agricultural producers in Croatia. The idea also attracted private angel investors that have decided to invest in creating web shops that will promote products produced

on small agricultural farms in Croatia and establish new channels for selling those products. There are currently four active web shops that sell agricultural products in Croatia: eceker.hr (established as the result of the Camarg project, financed through the European Regional Development Fund), ekotrznica.hr, naruci2go.hr, and emerkato.hr. For small agricultural farms in Osijek-Baranja County and Croatia, the COVID-19 crisis was an opportunity too good to be missed.

Cracow University of Economics - Measures

Cracow University of Economics, acting in connection with the announced epidemic state as well as Ordinances of the Polish Minister of Science and Higher Education on temporary limitation of the functioning of some entities of the higher education and science system in connection with preventing, counteracting and combating COVID-19, has undertaken various types of activities addressed to members of the academic community, employees and students, such as:


- Providing financial support for students, inter alia, in the scope of partial exemption from fees for studies
- Offering financial support for students to pay for dormitories
- Making changes in the organisation of teaching activities in terms of changing the form of education from full-time to distance learning
- Postponing the events organised in the CUE

Some more information is available at [CUE Website](#)



FEATURED ARTICLES

In this section we share a selection of relevant articles from the partnership and beyond. In this issue, we are puzzled with the question on “What Do We Know About University Engagement in Rural Regions?” and seek the answer from the University of Lincoln as a case study; we also explore the example of an inclusive innovation network in Barcelona that drives social cohesion and co-creation; and we explore how to stimulate entrepreneurship in lower-income contexts.



Location, Location, Location – What Do We Know About University Engagement in Rural Regions?

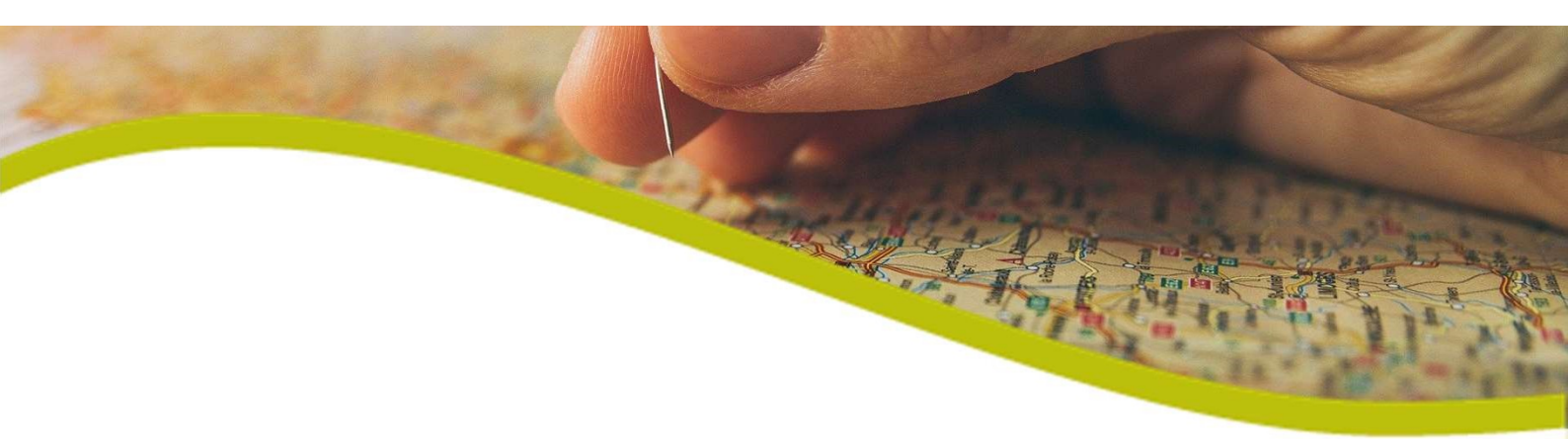
A recent case study of the University of Lincoln (UK) suggests, that perhaps university engagement should be further studied in different regional contexts. Currently, the research literature is focused on a rather idealistic 'one-size-fits-all' approach to university engagement, which overlooks the importance of regional environment. However, we know that finding synergies with specific local conditions and universities' institutional responses can be problematic (e.g. Benneworth et al. 2016), so a particular regional context does matter. The case of Lincoln, examined through entrepreneurial architecture framework originally conceptualized by Vorley & Nelles (2009), can shed some light on the characteristics of university engagement in rural regions.

Delivering third stream activities in such sparse innovation ecosystem can be more complicated due to a diverse economic base, lower skills level, geographical remoteness (Charles, 2016) and weaker entrepreneurial traditions (Ofstedal & Foss, 2015). Another issue is that universities in rural regions tend to be smaller satellite campuses, so they struggle to respond to the local expectations often based on the capacity of full-range universities. However, universities in rural regions do their share: they contribute to regional development e.g. by increasing skills levels, offering local access to higher education and responding to regional educational needs (Charles, 2016). Often universities in rural

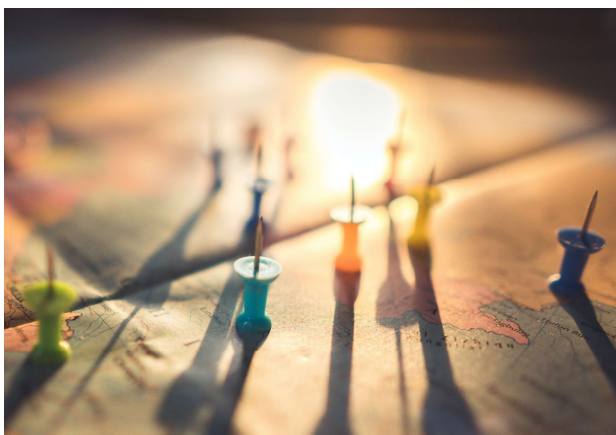
environments can actually have a stronger regional focus; for example, their strategic choices can be more employer-led and largely based on regional priority sectors.

This is exactly the case with the University of Lincoln (UoL). It is located in a rural region of Lincolnshire in East Midlands and has expanded significantly in the first two decades of its existence. Therefore, it provided an interesting case for observing how a university can efficiently engage with local stakeholders in a rural region. UoL has strategically aimed to develop a set of structures to support the regional economy, especially to liaise more with local businesses. It has also tried to address the problem of retaining graduates in the area, for example, by offering graduates free services and small-scale grants to foster entrepreneurship. The establishment of these and other support activities as well as local large-scale business collaboration initiatives, including the Lincoln Science and Innovation Park, is considered as a concrete way to attract more companies to the region – though the activities are mostly located in the central Lincoln.

Many of the UoL's engagement activities, varying from offering state-of-the-art facilities to a range of business support services to local companies, often result from a tight collaboration with the regional stakeholders, in particular, with the local authorities.



They expect the university to take action in the absence of other local knowledge institutions. These partnerships, typically on top management level, as well as demands of the local job market have influenced UoL's curricula design. As an example, the establishment of the UoL's new engineering school resulted from a long-term cooperation with Siemens Ltd. The local priority sectors, such as agriculture and food manufacturing, also steer UoL's research orientation towards serving local businesses.



These tentative findings from the case of UoL imply that universities located in rural regions have to deal with increased expectations and take leadership outside of academia. Top-level linkages with external stakeholders steer both the structures and the strategic choices towards serving the local job market and regional priority sectors. However, the engagement is linked more to individuals than institutions, which makes it vulnerable to staff changes and quite complicated to manage. The implementation of

engagement activities could be more effective if it did not rely on strong personal commitment of a few individuals, but on strategic institutional efforts to work more closely with external stakeholders. This gets us back to the starting point: what do we actually know about successful university engagement in different regional contexts? The case of UoL gave a glimpse of its features in rural regions, but if one-size-does-not-fit-all, the whole discussion around university engagement should become broader, taking different specific territorial characteristics affecting HEIs operational environment into account.

Authored by: Maria Salomaa, a project Specialist at Tampere University of Applied Science and a former RUNIN network PhD Researcher.

This blog originally appeared at University Industry innovation Network (UIIN) website. The article can be accessed [here](#).



HUBb30: an Inclusive Network for Territorial Development?

“Hub b30” is an open innovation network created to promote the collaboration, economic development and social cohesion of the territory in which the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB) is located.

hub b30.

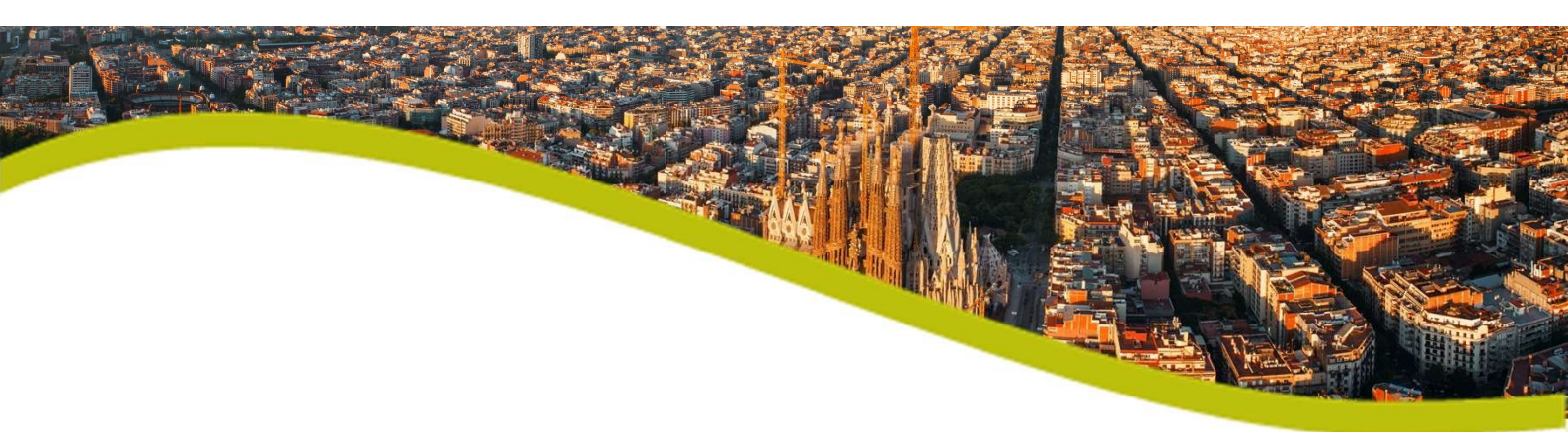
The B30 territory is made up of 23 municipalities in a valley that is crossed by the AP7 (B30) highway that connects the different municipalities, with an area of 485km² and has more than one million inhabitants. Its uniqueness lies in the fact that it represents the main industrial agglomeration of Catalonia and Spain with almost 30,000 companies (providing occupation for almost 400,000 workers (1) located within its area.

In this sense, approximately 50 kilometers of the highway axis called B30 structure a territory of a great demographic, economic and social relevance.

In this territory a series of very singular circumstances come together that explains why it is internationally known as an innovative region (2). Not only does it have a high intensity of companies, but also a high presence of scientific-technical institutions. It hosts one of the most advanced light laboratories in the world, the Alba Synchrotron, as well as two major public universities: the UAB and the UPC. These capacities include research centers of the CSIC and IRTA; the UAB Research Park and the ESADE Creapolis business school. The possibilities of contribution of territory B30 to a socioeconomic development of Catalonia based on the knowledge economy are extraordinary precisely because of the potential for transfer of knowledge and technology that it integrates.

In this context, the strategy of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona is to play a role as a node of metropolitan knowledge. The consolidation of this paper depends, among other things, on the ability of the University to functionally integrate into the territory of which it is a part. But linking the university with the rest of the actors is not an easy task in the context of the metropolitan area of Barcelona, characteristic of its variable geographies and changing boundaries in a reality that adopts urban models in the form of a network (3).

The Hub b30 contributes to the UAB understanding the logic of the various actors in the B30 territory, to which it is linked, and to determine the role of the university in a complex network of companies, entities, centers and subcentres.



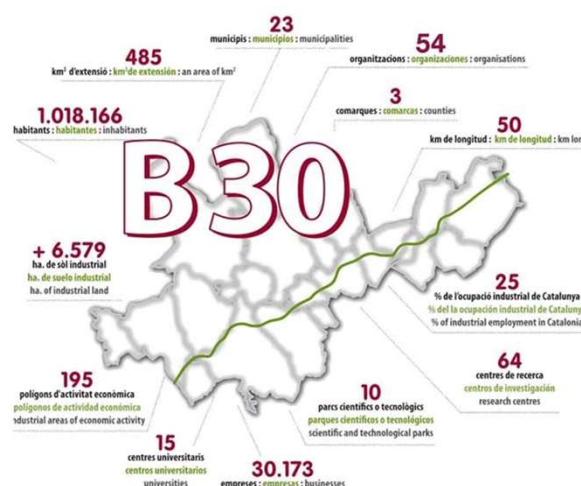
Born in 2018, the Hub B30 is conceived as a co-creation and co-creation ecosystem inspired by the 4 propellers, where companies, research and innovation agents, local administrations and citizens of the B30 have their place. It offers contacts, experts, resources and services to public and private organizations to help them detect and solve challenges in an efficient, innovative and competitive manner. It promotes access to knowledge about markets, financing, technology and patents; to equipment and scientific-technical infrastructures; to advisors in innovation and entrepreneurship; to research staff; and specialized training among others.

One of the first activities organized to promote interaction and collaboration among local stakeholder and boost knowledge transfer to the territory are the Hubb30 Innovation Brunches. These events are opportunities for networking between researchers, companies, entities and users and articulate collaborations around specific topics that combine technologies and diverse sectors.

In each of the announcements, a practical case of collaboration between diverse agents is presented to the public and in order to demonstrate successful examples of technological, social, product, process, marketing and business model innovations.

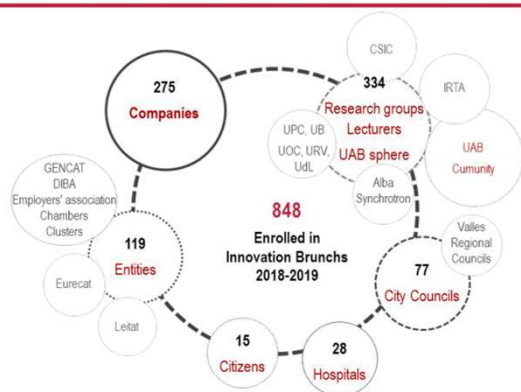
To date, the following twelve Innovation Brunches have been celebrated. On each one of the 12 topics, the UAB Research Park has produced an associated technological surveillance report that

integrates a vision of trends and innovation around the thematic, as well as a related patent analysis. The various reports produced so far are available and can be consulted at the following URL: <https://hubb30.cat/en/innovation-brunchs>. The 12 Technological Surveillance Reports of the Hub b30 Innovation Brunch can also be found at <https://hubb30.cat/en/innovation-brunchs>.



As in these sessions, the most disruptive technologies, trends and experts in the field are exposed, they generate a lot of interest among the business, social RDI and social fabric of the B30 territory. Consequently, they contribute to generating interactions that in the medium-longer term could become consolidated cooperation in research and innovation projects. The available data (4) confirm positive feedback from the participants that make up the quadruple propeller of field B30. They indicate that 68% of participants appreciate their satisfaction and efficiency between 3 and 4 points out of a total of 4.

hubb30. participating agents



The logic of Innovation Brunch is “top-down”, in the sense that the proposed topics take into account the characteristics of the territory and its opportunities for research, development and innovation from a strategic viewpoint. Since 2019 however and in order to complement the action of Hubb30 with a “bottom-up” logic, different events were organized “on demand” by and with the agents of the territory, the Innovation Mornings. The objective of this second typology of events is to work on problems, challenges and solutions utilizing Design thinking methodologies. This line of work has been initiated this year with the following two themes:

- Mental Health and Employment
- Business training needs

In essence, the Hub30 initiative is still young, but step by step recognition is being obtained both locally and supralocal and international level. Probably one of the most interesting success indicators of a hub is the quality and volume of the actors that have adhered to it or participated in the diverse activities.

Having reached the interest of RDI agents and local administrations for Hub b30, the company/industry membership phase is now underway.

Since the Hubb30 was initially created and impulsed by the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, the UAB Research Park, Eurecat and the B30 Area Association to promote innovation, further key RDI actors in the territory also decided to adhere to the HUB (UPC, Sincrotró Alba, ESADE Creapolis) and the key local administrations (County Council, Innovation Agency of Catalonia ACCIÓ). In 2020 it is expected to continue growing and to gain more diversity and efficiency with the adherence of the representatives of companies and industry of the territory B30 to the HUB.

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3. *Arcos(2019) Universidad, territorio y desarrollo local. Un análisis de la Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona.*
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Provided by: Konstantinos Kourkoutas, Roser Salvat Jofresa and Hafsa el Briyak Ereddam
This article originally appeared on UCityLab project website. Access the article [here](#).



How to Stimulate Entrepreneurship in the Context of Low Social Capital?

The so-called social capital (SC) builds the platform in every society for any innovative actions between people. Although the SC concept itself is rather a complex one when it comes to its multidimensionality and measurement (Fukuyama 1995; Scrivens and Smith 2013), this concept refers mainly to the level of trust between people in the society. Thus, the magnitude of social capital in a given society represents the extent to which people in this country treat themselves as reliable in their socio-economic roles, outside their family ties. In the absence of social capital, people do not expect other people would behave accordingly to the requirements they should fulfil as social actors. For example, when social capital is low, many people would not expect doctors of medicine to provide them with honest and high-quality health advisory, but they would rather expect them to be driven by self-interest and opportunism in their interactions with patients. Similarly, in the educational context, students may have problems in relying on their teachers' competencies, because they would again expect some other unethical and unprofessional motives driving their behaviour. One can easily imagine the difficulties created for entrepreneurs, while they try to launch and manage their businesses in such extreme context.

Unfortunately, European Union is very diverse with regard to the level of social capital characterizing their member states. While Scandinavia is commonly known as the region with particularly high social capital, not only in EU but even in the worldwide context, there are also European regions, where social capital is low or even very low. Specifically, post-communist regions tend to exhibit low levels of SC, which concern Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland and other Visegrad Countries, but it also refers to some regions in Germany that were a part of East Germany until the end of 80ties in 20th century. Of course, it does not mean that these are regions, where entrepreneurial spirit is absent. Actually, many of

these post-communist economies develop dynamically, which is connected with many new companies established in these countries and more effective management of existing companies there. While low social capital is visibly disturbing entrepreneurship in these regions, there are also some leverages like relatively cheap labour, effective education system and strong intrinsic motivation among people for improving their life conditions.

Nevertheless, while these regions have progressed enormously since they switched towards market economies, the economic growth cannot be powered by economic efficiencies only, and further development is largely dependent on switching towards more innovation-based economies. In turn, innovations especially radical ones, demand collaborative actions which is very visible in international supply chains, where most successful new products are developed as a result of collaborative product design, development and joint commercialization. If the level of social capital is low, the flow of knowledge between social actors may be not enough for boosting innovations, i.e. resulting in new brands recognizable on international scale. Stimulating entrepreneurship in such context may demand special approaches, because some traditional methods may be not enough. This creates the major challenge especially for education and institutions in these regions.

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Provided by: CUE and published at the Issue 1 of the PIETE magazine. Access the article [here](#)



entrepreneurship education
for rural development

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