



LLP-LDV-TOI-08-AT-0002

## INCUBA-TRAIN

AINova, an institute for adult education is a partner in the LLP-LDV-TOI-08-AT-0002 **Incuba-Train** project oriented towards transfer of innovation in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The project started in October 2008 and will last for two years. The coordinator of the project is the Association of Austrian Technology Centres, and 6 partners come from the CZ, HU and SK. The project provides a 'train the trainers' course for "incubation managers". In the first year of the project trainers were trained in 6 phases of innovation process and usage of tools concerning the implementation of new business ideas in SMEs. The basic course was developed by the Austrian project coordinator and adapted to the needs of SMEs in respective partner countries.

It is commonly known that small and medium-sized enterprises are the lifeblood of the European economy. In Europe, we count about 23 million SMEs; they provide 75 million jobs and account for 99% of all businesses in Europe. The majority of European SME's have their weaknesses in innovation, innovation management to strengthen their competitiveness, to grow and to create jobs. Therefore this project is focused on a training course for incubation managers - intermediaries. Trained incubation managers are able to help SME's to strengthen their competitiveness with innovation in their regions.

What is an incubation manager?

To get from an idea to market success is a process. The incubation manager is a coach supporting this process in existing SMEs and nascent SMEs (entrepreneurs). Incubation managers help SMEs to remain competitive by means of innovation (new products/ services, new business ideas, diversification, know-how transfer, etc) and be able to grow in order to create jobs. Incubation managers have also an "interpreting function" for SMEs in the process of technology transfer; Are innovations relevant for SMEs? How to find and how to commercialize it successfully, avoiding traps and get over difficulties/ barriers?

Participants/trainers learned about 6 phases of the innovation process and tools to use in these phases. They learned also a holistic point of view on SMEs, about tools (incl. advantages and disadvantages), how to use them along the value-added chain of the innovation process of SME's in an optimal way and support SME's in an active way. Training course consists of 7 training modules (Skill Units).

### Module 1 Introduction

To sensitize the participants to innovation / necessity of innovation for SME / entrepreneurs.

### Module 2 Strategy in general

To know and learn how to use strategic tools and connections between them, advantages and disadvantages (occasional pitfalls) of the tools, content of a business plan, to show the influence and importance of strategy especially for innovative SMEs and entrepreneurs.

### **Module 3 Innovation in general**

To get an idea what are the basics of innovation/strategy, how to control the process of innovation in general (phases of stage-gate processes), to learn about kinds of innovation and innovation portfolios.

### **Module 4 Searching and finding of innovations**

To learn and train usually used tools to find ideas, how to create an invention-team, prepositions of the management to be inventive, to which target-groups are innovations oriented and how to present them in the right/psychological way, the main content of a product, fits the company to the innovation and vice versa.

### **Module 5 Evaluation and selecting of innovations**

To learn to handle different tools to evaluate the innovation and the connection between the time to market and amortization of an innovation, how to prioritize ideas, innovation-SWOT analysis, risk-management for innovations.

### **Module 6 Implementation of innovations**

How to handle the introduction of the product/service in the company and in the market, what kind of problems could occur and how to find a solution, how to handle a decision strategy, how to calculate and evaluate the benefits for the customers and the company.

### **Module 7 Controlling**

To accompany a SME / start up during the hard (commercial) time during the time of starting and finishing of an innovation-process; to secure the market-entrance and show them how much liquidity they need to survive; there is a great lack of these special business know-how in SMEs and start-up's.

The project has the character of the 'train the trainers' course and is planned for 2 years. Besides training courses which took place in the first year of the project, discussions and case-studies of selected SME's will be elaborated in the second year. Altogether 24 trainers from SK, HU and CZ were trained. Training and handouts are provided in the English language. The content of the course is published on an online E-Learning platform. Certification according to the EQF-guidelines will be possible, see : [www.eu-certificates.org](http://www.eu-certificates.org).

The dissemination is planned in two levels:

- o **Nationally**, in the participating countries Austria, Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia:
- o **Internationally**, dissemination via the partner networks and at conferences (TII, ISPIM, EuroSPI); dissemination via the platform - EU-wide online training (incl. certification)

**Composition of project partnership** is a key factor for project success. There are Austrian partners - Association of Austrian Technology Centres specializing in distance learning, in managing the incubation manager training and company support including peer reviews, and DANUBE specialized in European Programmes for the Vienna Region (certification and qualification around industry based training [www.ecqa.org](http://www.ecqa.org)).

The incuba-train key professional competence development involves train-the-trainer/ incubation manager training for companies to support common SMEs in the 4 partner-countries to overcome their weaknesses in innovation and innovation management and to strengthen their competitiveness, growth and to creation of new jobs. The project is aimed at improving online training processes and offering the means to develop key competences to a level that equips them for supporting SMEs and their development as stated in the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council, of 18 December 2006, on key competences for lifelong learning (2006/962/EC).