



INFORMATION ON THE PROJECT'S RESULTS

Innovation company model

Business model for implementing innovation processes
in company performing within EU

Ī-model - INNOVATION COMPANY MODEL

Executive Summary

Overall objective of the European Ī-model project was to introduce the innovation management strategy into the wood processing industry. Ī-model is a frame of methodology, procedures and "ready to implement" materials for introducing an efficient innovation management; i.e. company's diagnostic tool, booklet containing good practice cases, training programme, methodology for designing Strategy and Operational plan, web pages, supporting materials, etc.

Under the project over 100 top and middle managers coming from selected companies were trained to become mentors to over 1000 co-workers, who already participate in innovation processes actively. A short version of Ī-model, i.e. the so-called Innovation Toolbox was developed. It represents a possibility for a wider sphere of companies, especially small ones, to implement the Ī-model independently, and thus make use of their employees' innovation potentials efficiently.

The experience gained by the project partners and the companies from Greece, Sweden, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia prove that the project is effective, given that the benefits of the project have already led to concrete economic results in the participating companies. Other companies, coming also from other industries, are offered a possibility to use the Ī-model and thus increase innovativeness and consequently achieve higher competitiveness.

The general objective of the Ī-model project was to introduce the innovation management strategy into the wood processing industry, namely on the basis of trainings and coaching of top and middle management on the rapid development and higher competitiveness of companies.

The final product of this project is the Ī-model – a frame of methodology, procedures and "ready to implement" materials for introducing an efficient innovation management in the companies; namely company's diagnostic tool, booklet, training programme, web pages, supporting materials, etc. Within the project the Ī-model was developed and tested, presenting the possibilities of stimulating processes in companies; how to create and transfer ideas into business realisation and establish a self-learning process in the field of innovation processes. Ī-model is a useful tool for implementing good practices and routines into regular work processes in the management of invention-innovation processes in the companies, not only in the wood processing industry but also in other sectors.

The project's target group encompassed companies representing wood processing industry and furniture branch in the target countries, namely Greece, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Sweden. Under the project over 100 top and middle managers coming from selected companies were trained to become mentors to their co-workers. Guided project work with the said managers represented an important part of the project. The participants acquired new knowledge and competences. Moreover, they developed concrete strategies and operational plans aimed at improving the innovation performance in their companies. Some topics concerning both; innovation of products/services and innovation of management itself were presented, e.g.: Introduction of workgroups into the organizational structure, with a primary task of generating inventive and innovative ideas by all employees; An improvement of the production line of non-standard products; Reduction of setup costs

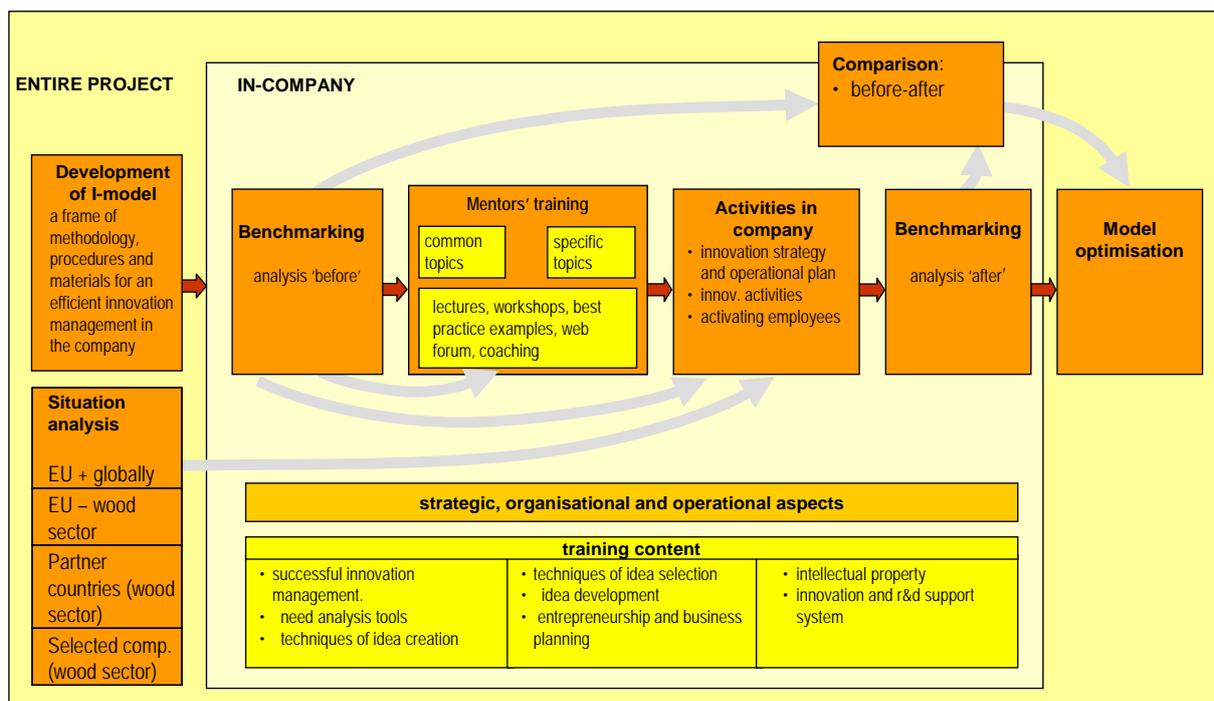
on the sewing machine; Development of a new generation of top-design products in cooperation with the Slovenian Academy of Design co-financed by the EU funds; Innovation of the existing product/service portfolio.

In addition, more than 1000 employees from participating companies were involved in training and concrete innovation processes guided by the mentors.

The main steps towards achieving the project objectives were as follows:

- Analysis (diagnostic) of existing situation of innovation management process in selected wood-processing companies in participating countries (analysis "before").
- Development of innovative learning organisational model, based on using modern Information Communication Technologies.
- Preparation and implementation of specific modern in-company training programme for top and middle management from selected companies. The aim of training was to improve their knowledge and skills for an efficient work in the innovation area in company's daily routine.
- Preparation of innovative strategy and operational plans for selected companies.
- Analysis "after" and optimisation of the *Ī-model*.
- Development of self-learning tool, which provides managers, trainers and consultants of different business sectors with the opportunity of continuous improvement of companies' innovation potential through a set of easy-to-use tool for self-evaluation and instructions for training program implementation.

The following scheme gives an overview of the project implementation.



Establishing a friendly self-learning model for any business sector

The implementation of the *Ī-model* project demanded considerable efforts of both the company and project advisors, i.e. a substantial amount of time and other resources. Therefore, it was applied in carefully selected eight companies only. The selection of companies had to be based on the managements' readiness to change/improve, company's size (and availability of managers' time which is often related to company size) and industry (the implementation of *Ī-model* within the Leonardo da Vinci funding was limited to the wood and furniture industry).

Taking into account the aforementioned, a short version of *Ī-model*, i.e. the so-called *Innovation Toolbox* was developed. It represents a possibility for a wider sphere of companies, especially small ones, to implement the *Ī-model* by themselves using a web platform or materials sent via surface mail.

The participants' opinions were very positive. Here are some of the opinions:

- *The workshops proved to be of a great benefit to our company.*
- *It is very hard to give a suggestion for an improvement since this was probably one of the best trainings I have ever attended.*
- *The most valuable benefit for my company is that we started thinking creatively again.*
- *Enthusiasm and professional contributions of all our lecturers.*
- *We have been provided with concrete examples and case studies for generating ideas.*
- *We acquired knowledge on different sources of funding offered by the European Commission.*
- *We were provided with new perspectives on entrepreneurship and the importance of innovations.*

Any company willing to start improving its innovation potential can use the *Innovation Toolbox*, a set of easy-to-use tool for self-evaluation as well as directions and concrete materials for programme implementation. The said directions are designed on the basis of a web questionnaire. The latter covers 8 crucial areas starting from idea creation techniques, all the way through innovation chain, up to intellectual property issues. Each area is evaluated by a respondent with a few short statements.

Upon filling-out a questionnaire, the respondent receives feedback on weak points of the company's innovation system. 8 crucial areas of questionnaire correspond to 8 chapters in the booklet. So, only those chapters which prove to be poorly developed in the particular company are suggested as "compulsory reading". Some others are recommended only as "optional". However, some areas such as "Building the fundamentals of a successful innovation management" are considered to be of general interest and are suggested in every case.

The suggested chapters are complemented by other study materials, such as links to good practice cases, links to internet resources and recommended articles. All of the above are selected according to questionnaire results. In addition, the booklet "Managing Innovation and R&D Processes in the EU Environment", the "EU and national analysis of the present state of affairs in innovation and R&D in wood and furniture industry" and the web page represents an important support for companies.

At the final International Conference held in Ljubljana-Slovenia the companies, project partners, representatives from universities, journalists and governmental representatives evaluated the project as very successful, giving the participating as well as other interested companies an improvement opportunity both at the strategic and the operational level. These benefits have already led to concrete economic results.

Please consult the *E-model* project web site www.innovation.si for additional information.

Partners:



Leading partner: Korona plus d.o.o. - Institute for Innovation and Technology (Slovenia). **Partners** of the project: Hellenic Regional Development Center (Greece), ICDC – Mjärdevi Science Park (Sweden), Cassovia BIC, s.r.o. – Business and Innovation Center (Slovak Republic), Wood Industry Cluster (Slovenia), University of Primorska, Faculty of Management Koper (Slovenia).

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