

W N N N

Workouts for innovation leaders

TRANSNATIONAL RESEARCH REPORT - SUMMARY

O1 - WINN customization methodology



E&D
Knowledge
Consulting



HANSE-PARLAMENT
Network for Small and Medium Enterprises

PROJECT N°: 2020-1-RO01-KA204-079799

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1. Introduction

This Transnational Research report is developed in the framework of the project “*WINN: Workouts for innovation leaders*” with reference no. 2020-1-RO01-KA204-079799, a project financed through the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Commission and implemented by a consortium of 6 organisations from 5 EU countries – Romania, Portugal, Spain, Poland and Germany.

The goal of the WINN project is to ensure that SMEs managers in no/low tech industries are prepared to lead for innovation, by developing proper mind-set and adapting their behaviours and beliefs to allow authentic innovation leadership.

In order to support the achievement of this ambitious goal and to gather information for the development of the other main intellectual outcomes of WINN project, the partnership performed at the beginning of the project implementation a research to determine and understand the innovation mind-set in each of the 5 countries involved in this project.

The research that led to the drafting of this transnational report was *field-based* and was achieved through a questionnaire applied to SMEs managers/owners from no/low-tech industries and interviews with representatives from SME support organisations. As a project task, each partner organisation had to apply the questionnaire to a minimum of **25 persons** belonging to the target group mentioned above, from no/low-tech industries, and implement *one interview* with a SME-support organisation. The results were transposed into the national research reports, which, in their turn, have served as foundation for this transnational report.

In order to adequately reflect the innovation mind-set in each of the 5 countries participating in the project, the transnational report comprises 3 main sections:

1. **Executive Summary** - presenting the purpose of Transnational Research Report and briefly describing the main parts of the reports and the research methodology
2. **Findings from field-based research in partner countries** summarising transversally the identified trends across national context (and eventually most relevant similarities/differences), as resulted from the national research reports prepared by partners.
3. **Conclusion** making more obvious the area(s) where the research findings suggest that there is a need for change and improvement.

This summary presents the first and the last part of the transnational report. Please see the Transnational Research Report in English for a detailed information on the findings from the field-based research in the partner countries.

2. Conclusion

The present research, conducted in 5 EU countries, creates the image of a low or no tech SME sector as anchored in the realities of their fields of activity. According to the data collected and interpreted for the purposes of this transnational report, it is obvious that innovation is at the

forefront of SME managers' and owners' priorities when it comes to efficiently developing a business in all 5 European countries of the consortium.

Both the 189 questionnaire respondents and the 6 interviewees were quite receptive to the idea of innovation and tried to shape a wide image of the phenomenon by focusing on attitudes, practices and actions meant to increase it and thus providing a clear picture on how innovation is approached in each country. Mention should be first made of the wide span of the report (as showed by the large range of low or no-tech fields of activity respondents came from – both major and smaller industry branches), which basically demonstrates that the WINN project was designed to respond to an increasing need, that of adapting to the requirements of an ever-changing socio-economic context.

As common denominators that can be reported from the answers of the respondents from all 5 countries, employees need to be encouraged to be actively involved in the development of the company through a variety of practices, as have been mentioned above. They should be able to communicate openly, to express ideas, to feel they have an impact on performance, to be provided feedback and to continue to search for solutions that may eventually lead to the company's openness to innovative actions. Related to that, innovation is encouraged by an attitude open to change and to risks, genuine dialogue/communication between the manager and the employees, mutual trust, good knowledge of the business environment and of the market, cooperation and sustainability.

The basic layer on which innovative behaviour is built is made up of three ingredients, according to the respondents in all countries, that is *Innovation mindset, Critical thinking and Collaborative behaviours*. There seems to be a common need identified by all respondents, regardless of the countries they come from, for dialogue, openness and participation in the running of a business if innovation is desired. The paths to innovation, however, may take different forms in the 5 countries (extracted from the responses as focusing more on the company side or on the employee), from strategic planning to employees' education/training activities. Certain differences may also be noted in terms of idea generation and idea application behaviours, with some varieties between the countries (some of them choosing Investing effort in developing, testing and commercialising the idea (Portugal), others Displaying strong personal commitment to the idea (Spain, Poland, Germany) or Enhancing the Creativity of your followers (Romania)). Along the way, innovation has to survive challenges that may be of an economic, legislative, financial or human nature, as the respondents have indicated.

Innovation can be turned into a real culture, and the need to receive proper training in the field has been signalled by the participants in the field research as an important factor that needs some improvement and conditions success.