

SUMMARY: CREATIVE STEPS 2.0 FINAL REPORT

JULY 2018



**Innovation model
for business ideas development
in the context of international and cross-border
collaboration between the main participants:
companies, students and business experts**



SUMMARY: CREATIVE STEPS 2.0 AND LESSONS LEARNED

The following report reflects the development of the Creative Steps 2.0 innovation workshop and its implementation in four countries between Fall 2016 and Spring 2018.

INTRODUCTION

Creative Steps 2.0 is a model of an innovation workshop. A guided step-by-step approach and methodology that helps to develop business ideas in the context of international and cross-border collaboration between the main participants involved in the process: companies, students and business experts. The aim of the Creative Steps 2.0 innovation workshop is to encourage cross-border entrepreneurship in the Northern Periphery of Europe through a collaborative innovation and business development process. The Creative Steps 2.0 Model has been developed as part of the NPA co-funded 'a creative momentum project'.

Need for the Creative Steps 2.0 Model

Building the Creative Steps 2.0 Model was a response to the challenges of a more globalised world, contemporary working life and business nature which requires a creative and innovative mindset and the ability to work across distances using modern technologies. It is also a response to the need to develop education and training methods that will encourage entrepreneurship and the networking of companies in remote Northern European regions.

The Creative Steps 2.0 (CS 2.0) innovation workshop Model is not a typical business development and innovation workshop and can be considered as an innovation result of 'a creative momentum project'. It is distinguished from many other innovation workshops for the following reasons:

First, the CS 2.0 methodology aims to enhance cross-border collaboration and interaction between businesses and students with the help of coaches and external experts.

Second, the CS 2.0 methodology aims to encourage the use of digital tools for better online and distance collaboration.

Third, it offers simple patterns of activities that help all participants in the workshop to progress in their work from one step to another with clear tasks and outcomes. Therefore, it serves as a guideline process for participants in various entrepreneurship development situations.



CREATIVE STEPS 2.0

The Creative Steps 2.0 Model takes into account three main cornerstones that are the ultimate goals of the Model:



- Encouraging entrepreneurship and developing an entrepreneurial mindset by boosting creativity and innovativeness in the development of innovative business ideas, products and services.
- Creating a support mechanism for local entrepreneurs to go global by enhancing cross-border, business-academia collaboration locally and internationally, and enabling the use of modern technology and digital collaboration tools.
- Enhancing entrepreneurship pedagogies better suited to meet the challenges of 21st century working life. The aim of the workshop and the final outcome is to create a new product or service idea and to present a prototype.

KEY LESSONS

Piloting of the Creative Steps 2.0 Model showed that it is a very valuable innovation, networking and cross-border collaboration methodology. It has 10 clear steps, however participants suggested that even simpler and clearer steps could be developed in the future. Online collaboration and working with teams was a rather new approach for many participants and is extremely relevant in the era of digitalisation, even though technology did not always work as expected.

It can be concluded that CS 2.0 has been a valuable and useful tool with largely positive feedback from all participants, who also gave certain recommendations for further development. Actual implementation and testing of the CS 2.0 Model gave great confidence about the usefulness of such methodologies for business-academia intensive cooperation, better entrepreneurial education for students and multidisciplinary cooperation which results in real outcomes for beneficiaries: companies and students.

Some of the main benefits and challenges of the CS 2.0 Model were found to be:



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Benefits

- Network-based work across national boundaries using online working tools opens up new opportunities for international operations.
- Co-design, a method familiar from service design, was used to design the Model and the guidelines for developing the innovation process.
- The buzz of creative work and a good team spirit could be felt throughout the work process, which was highly intensive at times. It was also fed by events linked to the workshops. The students felt inspired by the events and utilising various methods. In particular, energising activities helped boost the work.
- Planning of the workshop takes a lot of time, as there are so many actors involved: companies, external experts as evaluators, creative clinic professionals and so on. However, the implementation phase has been extremely inspirational and energising for all, based on feedback and the personal experience of project staff.
- Cooperation and working over distance is certainly a business trend that has already emerged. It is observed that the use of online tools among small creative businesses and young start-ups is not yet a daily routine, neither are they used as effectively by students or academics. Therefore, the workshops were a great opportunity to test various online tools for digital cooperation and to enhance digital ability, which is extremely important for all participants: businesses, companies and also future education. Online working, as a part of the workshops, proved to all participants that distance is not an obstacle. When an entrepreneur from Finland is meeting with an entrepreneur from Northern Ireland and co-operating with a creative student team again in a different location, it can produce really great results.
- An innovation process not part of the everyday routine for most small companies, therefore workshops such as CS 2.0 are greatly motivating and encouraging for companies to get outside the box with the help of external “energy” - creative student teams. Companies in most of the cases were surprised by the common outcome from joint working.

Challenges

- One of the main challenges was to make a balanced plan for the entire workshop, taking into account the goals, the diversity of participants, cooperation over distance, international component and novelty of the process to all. During implementation it is important to follow the plan, however to also be flexible when needed and adjust to specific circumstances and situations that may arise.
- Online working, internet/network connection and the use/availability of required equipment during online sessions can create unexpected challenges and requires a lot of patience from all participants to tolerate unexpected interruptions during online meetings. As far as possible, there should be very good preparation before online sessions, all connections must be checked, participants should be asked to join the online meeting room well in advance, even half an hour before. Regarding the equipment – the most common problem was due to incorrect headset use and the use of computer microphones. There is a need for a professional IT person to be involved



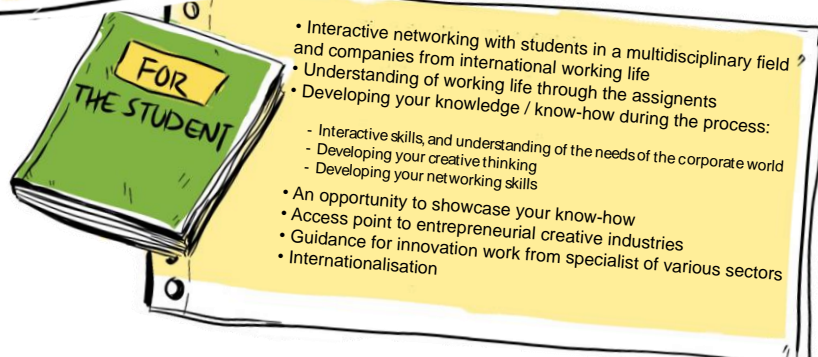
CREATIVE STEPS 2.0

who can advise and control the technical aspects during the workshop and solve problems as they arise.

- Diversity of participants is certainly a great challenge, while it is also a great benefit to have participants with so many different backgrounds: international, professional, academic and business experience. It is important for coaches to realise this diversity in advance and plan the workshop and actual work to take into account these differences, needs, requests, interests and involvement.



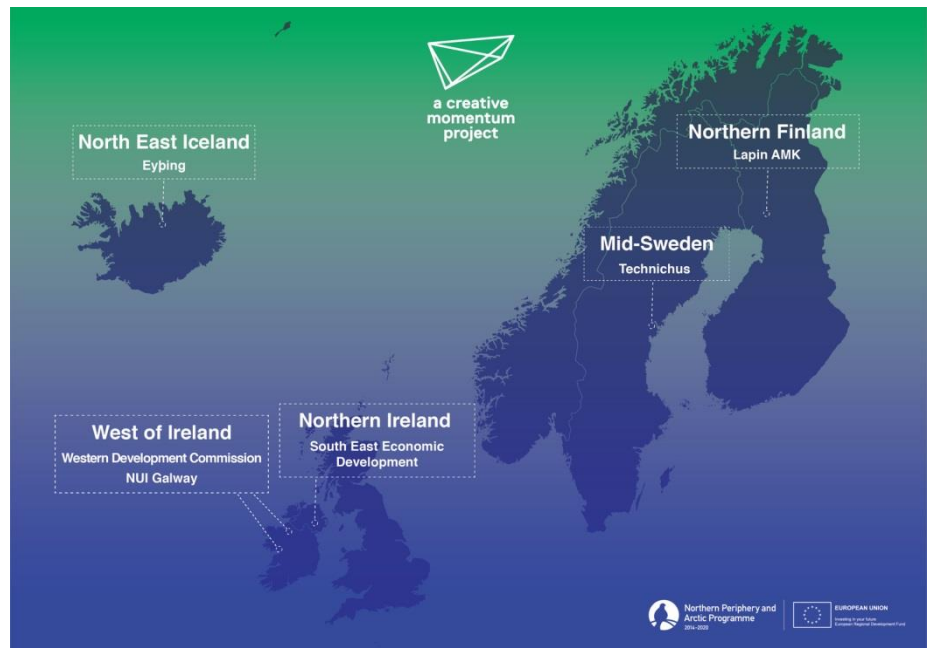
CREATIVE STEPS 2.0 BENEFITS FOR THE BUSINESS





CREATIVE STEPS 2.0

**this is:
a creative
momentum
project**



LAPIN AMK
Lapland University of Applied Sciences

TECHNICHUS
Science Center Härnösand



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Economic Development



**MENNINGARRÁÐ
EYPINGS**

