

RDF-RWG - Competence Brokering Linking SME Needs to Research Opportunities

Research-based brokering is a sub-program of the program Mobilisation for R&D-related innovation (MOBI), organized by the Research Council of Norway. A host institution for a centre usually cooperates with one or more research institutions, organisations or enterprises in respect of the establishment, operation and funding of the centre and thus form a CoE consortium.

Norway has certain advantages that can be utilized to promote knowledge development at regional level. The subsidiary goals are the following: Increase the R&D activity of SME; Improve the reception capacities of SME; Strengthen the economic competitiveness of SME; Strengthen the knowledge of new technology adopted by the SME; Strengthen the links and communication between R&D institutes and SME Support technology transfer from universities and technical colleges; Increase the knowledge of the TT-process and the methodology. The main strategy of the project is the involvement of the competence mediators who work as innovation carriers between SMEs and Research Institutes within a framework, which takes advantage of a proactive approach to transferring innovation. A representative example is the particular BP which has been designed to convince SME that R&D is a better and more profitable way of doing innovation. The Project Management involved the hire of staff as competence brokers in different geographical areas with a good background on science and applied research.

<http://www.cmr.no/>

SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths:

- A national project with strong regional focus;
- Extremely wide project experience background - biotechnology, energy, environment, medicine, polar research, social sciences and large scale programs;
- Short decision times to assign funding;
- The initiative can exploit the experience coming from a similar former initiative (TEFT program) and the presence of valid instruments deriving from projects of the Research Council of Norway, over the last 12 years (in particular the Centers for Research-based Innovation and the Centers of Excellence);
- 24 contracts signed from 2005-2007 with a total funding of €250 million from government sources, €200 million from SMEs (in kind) and €200 million from SMEs (cash);
- SMEs & research institutions are proactively encouraged to work together (in R&D);
- It uses a transparent technological transfer (TT) process implementation, based on a series of so-called “success factors”.

Weaknesses:

- Web site do not provide information regarding applied financial mechanism;
- After 3 years of operation, despite the thorough collection of relevant information, little or no common accessible feedback information is yet accessible as to assess the true impact and effect of it;
- BP seems unsuitable for encouraging innovation through large-scale projects between or even with large companies and corporations;
- No availability of feedback information useful to assess the true impact and effect of the Best Practice.

Opportunities:

- Ideal for linking with different project partners working on multispectral project pattern;
- Further benefits (such as promotion and dissemination) may be achieved with the introduction of the network within joint EU-funded projects;
- In certain areas, like construction and building, there is a high economic activity and the presence of SMEs is very favorable.

Threats:

- Possibilities to support extremely large variety of projects may lead to lack of competence in some cases;
- The focus is shifted to a narrower spectrum of industries or fields;
- The whole venture is potentially vulnerable to the brokers' capacity and on the available networking activities.