



STARTUP INNOVATION
GOES TO MARKET



Design Option Paper

Deliverable D1:

Design Options Paper “StartInnShop” - Startup Innovation goes to market

H2020-INNOSUP-2014-5

July 2017

Authors:

Lucie Sanchez, ASTER

Sveva Ruggiero, ASTER

Christian Travier, Laval Mayenne Technopole

Sylvain Maussion, Laval Mayenne Technopole

Paul Healy, The Rubicon Centre

Miriam Adair, The Rubicon Centre

This project has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under Grant Agreement No 713803.

The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of the StartInnShop partnership and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union or of the Programme’s management structures.

Table of Contents

Executive summary	3
Chapter 1. Introduction	4
Background of the project	4
Structure of the Design Option Paper	6
Twinning Advanced method and project scheme	6
4. Glossary	8
Chapter 2. StartInnShop partners and start-up support services	9
Partner profiles and strengths	9
Good practices	14
Chapter 3. Sales support for start-ups	25
Features of those services	25
Experiences outside the partnership	25
Chapter 4. StartInnShop approach	28
StartInnShop service package contents	28
Inclusion of companies	30
Chapter 5. StartInnShop service pack to support start-up sell their products	34
Annex 1 - Questionnaire for inclusion in the service	39
Annex 2a - Model of cooperation agreement	41
Annex 2b - Template to collect feedback from beneficiaries	46

Executive summary

StartInnShop, a European project funded by the call H2020 Programme - Innosup 5, aims is to (re)design, integrate and make more effective those services dedicated to support innovative startups in their processes to access customers especially in international markets.

StartInnShop consortium gathers three organizations supporting innovation and SMEs in their respective regions - Emilia-Romagna, Mayenne and Cork - with good connections at national levels and active in the main European networks for innovation and business creation.

ASTER (Italy) has a long and recognized experience in designing and implementing innovation policies, managing projects and strategies in Emilia-Romagna. ASTER has a department for StartUp where entrepreneurs to be and startups are supported through training, consultancy, mentorship and networking opportunities.

Laval Mayenne Technopole (France) is a non for profit organisation dedicated to territorial economic development and specialized in innovation support, acting in the Mayenne department which is a small rural and industrial territory in the Western France.

The **Rubicon Centre** (Ireland) is a well established Campus Incubation Centre based in South West Ireland which serves as a first point of contact for Entrepreneurs in Cork City and County. The Rubicon Centre hosts 57 knowledge based start-up companies and is jointly financed by Cork Institute of Technology (CIT) and Enterprise Ireland.

During StartInnShop, partners have organised several experience and knowledge exchanges during peer-to-peer sessions and study visits with their local communities with the objective to deepen the knowledge on their tools and routines to support startups developing new markets and improve the services offered to local startup communities in this field.

Partners have also co-created a new service dedicated to foreign startups and tested this new service in a group of startups and entrepreneurs.

The service has been piloted from the beginning of the project with a lean approach and a well defined approach has been identified as a result of StartInnShop.

Chapter 1. Introduction

1. Background of the project

StartInnShop is a one-year project cofunded by the European Union H2020 Program - Innosup 5, which aims is to (re)design, integrate and make more effective services provided by the Innovation Agencies dedicated to support innovative companies in their processes to access international markets. Its aim is to match one of the most relevant goals of the SME instrument: “to support enterprises in verifying the technical feasibility of an innovative idea, its market potential and find out possible international partners”.

StartInnShop aims at developing a service pack that, with the support of coaches and incubator managers, could assist startups and entrepreneurs in their early stage in a first exploration of market opportunities. This service will also allow new entrepreneurs in better exploiting other development channels, and mainly those provided by EU funds (as the same SME instrument and other funding schemes provided by H2020), since it will allow new enterprises in focusing better their projects and targets.

In detail, StartInnShop allowed the partnership to integrate their different strategies, tools and stages to support companies in commercializing their products. When accessing a support service dedicated to assess product viability, explore market opportunities or prepare a minimum viable product, beneficiaries most often receive a full theoretical support, but the majority of programs that are now available lack of practical experiences to allow entrepreneurs to really test their ideas. The final output, which is described in the following chapters, is a modular service set up thanks to the contribution of the whole partnership for accompanying innovative, knowledge-based and creative startups in adjusting their products according to the market’s needs and secure the first sales. Apart from the design of the service, the project allowed the partnership in strengthening their relations and establish permanent links, both to enhance each partner’ internationalization perspectives and to offer to their respective beneficiaries new opportunity to expand their business abroad.

In its early stages, a start-up needs capital and services to strengthen the team's expertise and access to the markets, find commercial partners and foreign

investors. In addition, as noted by Steve Blank¹, there is a need for strong support from (public) institutions in the reference ecosystems in channel identification and internationalization, so that they do not waste valuable resources in their research. Market readiness and access to international markets coincide with the startup ability to approach international contexts, to find (and remain on) new channels to sell products which are key assets for growth. Recent reports point out that the business volume of enterprises with a foreign turnover exceeding 50% is more than twice the volume of companies that do not export. Internationalization therefore strengthens growth, enhances competitiveness and reinforces the survival ability of enterprises in the long run, especially those companies with a high rate of technological innovation and which, by their nature, need to grow fast. European Startup Monitor² figures describe the European ecosystem as still highly concentrated within national boundaries, both in terms of nationality of founders (for instance, 96.8% of Italian startup founders are Italians, compared to 66% of British in the United Kingdom), and because they operate essentially on the domestic market (56.9% of Italian companies are only targeting the domestic market).

The same report highlights the relationship between internationalization capability and the growth/survival rate of a startup: in Europe, 87.7% of start-ups already operating on a global scale are in good health and think of further expansion.

StartInnShop tackled specifically the main challenge of an early stage company: the difficulty of turning a startup into a scale-up business.

In particular, the services mapped and analyzed during the project describe three different ecosystems that are very attentive to scouting and supporting new ideas and entrepreneurial proposals, with numerous opportunities - firstly, those offered by universities and their respective technology transfer centers.

There are also numerous public and private acceleration programs and paths that allow to increase skills and leverage capabilities, also facilitating their access to funds and opportunities available on the European context - as for instance the three stage of the SME instruments.

The goal of the activities was to set up a service package to push start-ups in their growth, help them to open up to global realities and prepare their approach to the most important European innovation contexts where they may be able to find investments, opportunities, strategic partners and business contacts.

¹ Born Global or Die Local – Building a Regional Startup Playbook (S.Blank, 2014)

² http://europeanstartupmonitor.com/fileadmin/presse/download/esm_2015.pdf

2. Structure of the Design Option Paper

The StartInnShop Design Option Paper (DOP) is intended to be the reference document for the project activities, and in particular:

- a practical tool to describe the contexts and the main needs to which the project responds;
- context and good practices analysis;
- the service developed, the targets and the different conditions and features in given contexts that may facilitate or favor the service implementation and effectiveness.

In particular, this paper identifies and documents the implementation options, guidelines and implementation alternatives that the partners in the challenge have experienced and also contains a non exhaustive list of recommended bibliography related to business creation, go-to-market approaches and internationalization strategies. After a first description of the project background, glossary, methodology and main ambitions (Chapter 1), in the Chapter 2 the DOP presents information on the consortium main features and practices that have been studied to design the new service, fully described in Chapter 3, which is the response to the problem and needs identified.

Chapter 4 contains a full detailed description of the project activities developed during the project meetings and finally Chapter 5 includes the recommendations for transfer and adaptation..

3. Twinning Advanced method and project scheme

In project implementation, the consortium followed the approach launched by the European Commission for setting up a process able not only to favor the transfer of good practices among agencies, but to provide a complete set of information to design and implement a new generation of better practices. StartInnShop activities have thus been conceived on the basis of the Twinning Advanced methodology, in order to push the consortium in addressing common challenges and developing solutions that are more than a simple collection or sum of each partner's strengths. By making the most of the collective experience, expertise and knowledge, the project developed and tested an advanced service able to fully meet the challenges highlighted during the preparation phase.

Concept, approach and support measures have thus been conceived on the basis of the features required by this methodology, and in particular on the need of developing innovative tools that are easily implemented in each partner set of services already active, thus improving the performances in terms of entrepreneurship support of the Innovation Agencies.

Here follows a description of the collaboration approach and activities carried out during the project:

Meetings		Meeting in Laval		Meeting in Cork		Meeting in Bologna	
Period	Aug.-Sep 2016r	October 2016	Oct. -March 2017	March 2017	March-June 2017	June 2017	
Partner exchanges	<p>Webinars in August and October</p> <p>Elaboration of the document "Guidelines for service description and assessment" and identification of startup support service</p>	<p>• Peer sessions on startup services: presentation of services and review of routines</p> <p>• Study visit to Laval Mayenne Technopole and NeoShop</p>	<p>Webinars in December and February</p> <p>Exchange of practices and first draft of StartInnShop service contents</p>	<p>•Peer sessions on startup services: discussion on StartInnShop service contents</p> <p>•Study Visit to Rubicon Centre and networking event</p>	<p>Definition of StartInnShop service</p>	<p>•Peer sessions on startup services: validation of StartInnShop service contents, identification of strategies for diffusion and consolidation</p> <p>•Study Visit to ASTER incubator "Le Serre di ASTER" and networking event</p>	<p>Elaboration of a brochure on StartInnShop services including selected good practices from partners and diffusion to business incubators and startups</p>
Services for startups	<p>Promotion of StartInnShop among Laval Mayenne Technopole and identification of interested startups</p>	<p>Meetings with Laval startups interested in the Italian market</p>	<p>Feedback meetings with startups</p> <p>Contacts with local partners</p>	<p>Meetings with Irish startups for feedback on product development and distribution in France and Italy</p>	<p>Feedback meetings with startups</p> <p>Contacts with local partners</p>	<p>Meetings with Italian startups for feedback on product development and distribution in France and Ireland</p>	<p>Follow up with startups included in StartInnShop service testing</p>

In particular, the approach has been developed on the following principles to design the StartInnShop service:

- Activities are centred during partner meetings that combine peer-session where partners exchange views and inputs on the basis of their routines and tools for supporting their startup community in developing business opportunities.

- The service is developed with a “lean approach³” using the method partners usually work with among their startup community to support the development of new business models: a service concept has been identified at the very beginning of the project and a “minimum service” has been tested since the very first meeting.
- After testing the “lean service”, a more elaborated service offer has been jointly developed including the Go-to-market/StartInnShop service and a selection of services available in ASTER, LMT and Rubicon Centre for foreign startups.
- Partners have identified routes to offer Go-to-market/StartInnShop services after the project end.
- The service has been diffused in partner regions and outside those: a brochure has been developed (see Annex 2) and diffused in the EBN Congress 2017 organised in Enghien Les Bains (France) in July 2017.

4. Glossary

Beachhead market is the first market segment to launch a service/product, because it's where most paying customers are based. Such customers are characterized by the fact that all buy similar products, have a similar sales cycle and expect products to provide value in similar ways and serve themselves as high-value references for other potential customers.

Go-to-market strategy (GTM strategy): is an action plan that specifies how a company will reach customers and achieve competitive advantage.

Internationalization: is the process of increasing involvement of enterprises in international market. As for startups, it is a key driver for improving their economic performance because it increases the capacity to innovate and allows to better exploit technological developments, favoring the protection of innovation.

A **Scaleup (company)** has indicatively an average annualized return of at least 20% in the past 3 years, with at least 10 employees in the beginning of the period (OECD, 2007). A scaleup can be identified as being in the "growth phase" of its life-cycle.

Value proposition (VP) is a statement that clearly identifies what benefits a customer will receive by purchasing a particular product or service from a particular vendor

³ <https://www.lean.org/WhatsLean/>

Chapter 2. StartInnShop partners and start-up support services

1. Partner profiles and strengths

StartInnShop consortium gathered three organizations supporting innovation and SMEs in their respective activity areas - Emilia-Romagna, Mayenne and Cork - with good connections at national levels and active in main European networks for innovation and business creation. The consortium has been set up within the **EBN - European Business and Incubation Network** context and exploited the opportunities of the network (meetings, relations and case studies) to further develop the activities foreseen within the project.



Fig.1 - StartInnshop partners during the study visit in Bologna

All of them are also Intermediary Organisations of the **Erasmus for young Entrepreneurs** initiatives, which promotes the mobility of young entrepreneurs in Europe and has been considered as a key tool to integrate within the services related to international go-to-market strategies.

During the project activities, the three partners had the opportunity to learn more about the respective tools and methodologies focusing on the project contents but also related to startup and business support as a whole.

Their high level complementary competencies in innovation processes and management (ASTER has a long experience in services provision for business ideas arising from research, the Rubicon Centre is strongly focused on business development and Laval Technopole has already set up a shop to assist startups in approaching the market) allowed the consortium to improve their respective services acquiring further strengths and expertise.

In detail:

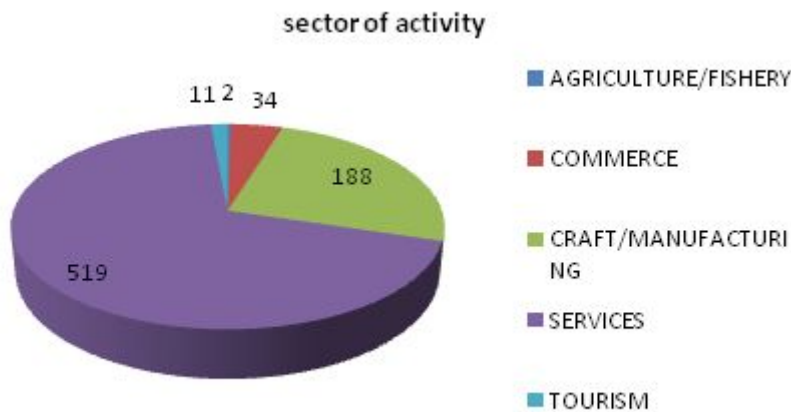
ASTER has a long and recognized experience in designing and implementing innovation policies, managing projects and strategies in Emilia-Romagna. Since 2004, the StartUp Department supports entrepreneurs to be and startups through offering training, consultancy, mentorship and networking opportunities. One important tool for the Emilia-Romagna startup community is EmiliaRomagnaStartUp⁴ a reference platform to support new innovative companies. The platform was launched by the Emilia-Romagna region and ASTER in 2011 and currently gathers over 300 startups and 50 organizations supporting those. In the platform, startups can gain visibility, access training and consultancy. Another relevant tool that has been introduced to the consortium is the acceleration program “Le Serre di ASTER”, dedicated to support startups and business projects. The accelerator includes a wide open space to accommodate several startups and an additional office is dedicated to international hosts for limited periods. Beside the classic acceleration services (tutorship, tailor made consultancies, trainings and networking), beneficiaries have also access to a Mentor Board, composed by high level entrepreneurs from some of the most relevant SMEs and corporates in the region, that agreed to made available their expertise to assist the startups in their business development and to a wide network composed by research labs, fablabs, business support organization and experts.

⁴ www.emiliaromagnastartup.it

The Emilia-Romagna regional startup ecosystem

The Emilia-Romagna is by tradition a fertile territory for the creation of new enterprises. Latest available data demonstrate the existence and the persistence of a vibrant and receptive ecosystem for creativity and innovation, which has produced significant results in terms of business creation.

In terms of numbers, Emilia-Romagna ranks 2nd place in Italy with around 800 startups, right after Lombardy.



Laval Mayenne Technopole is a non for profit organisation dedicated to territorial economic development and specialized in innovation support, acting in the Mayenne department which is a small rural and industrial territory in the Western France. With 300 000 inhabitants, Mayenne is a small territory with a diversified economy mainly made of traditional industrial SME's in the agrofood, mechanical and electronic sectors. In the last 20 years, under the leadership of the former mayor of Laval when he was the French ministry for research, and thanks to the action of Laval Mayenne Technopole and a few others institutional and education actors, Laval has developed an ecosystem of startups, mainly in the digital sector. Laval has specialized in the Virtual and Augmented Reality technology with a complete ecosystem (startups, companies, research labs, technology center, higher education). Laval has launched 20 years ago Laval Virtual annual international exhibition, that has become the largest fair in Europe on Virtual and Augmented reality.

Laval Mayenne Technopole is the only organisation in Mayenne addressing all the facets of innovation support to all size of companies.

- LMT supports entrepreneurs to be through two programs that help them to validate their business ideas. Then entrepreneurs are supported through the incubator to develop their startup. LMT has also 2000 square meters office building and a coworking space to provide startups with a suitable premise to launch their business in an appropriate ecosystem. More than 30 entrepreneurs are supported every year in these programs focused on the design thinking methodology, where the client is put at the heart of the process. LMT is also involved in women entrepreneurship and currently supports more than 25% of women in its program.
- In 2013, LMT launched the Neoshop (www.neoshop-laval.fr), an innovation boutique providing a soft commercial launch for innovative “B2C” products. This innovative supporting tool for startups was a world premiere. LMT is working in developing a network of innovation shops to extend the service, and a first step was reached at the end of 2016 with the opening of the Montreal boutique. Neoshop has also developed an online shop (www.boutique-neoshop.fr).
- LMT supports SME’s mainly through two innovative tools: the Challenge Competences is an open innovation challenge where students propose innovations idea to SME’s. This one week challenge is very successful since 70% of the participating SME’s choose to develop the idea proposed by the students. Apollo program is a design thinking 4 months program that allows SME’s to validate an innovation idea.
- LMT also develops specialized clusters activities, like networking events, collaborative projects and newsletters, for the digital and agrofood sectors.

For the last seven years, LMT was very active in developing international relations to help the internationalization of its startups cohort. These relations were mainly developed through the participation to 15 EU projects (Interreg, Erasmus, FP7, H2020), thus gaining a strong experience and a large network.

The **Rubicon Centre** is a well established Campus Incubation Centre based in South West Ireland which serves as a first point of contact for Entrepreneurs in Cork City and County.

The South West region is home to a wide range of Inward Investment Companies, such as Apple, Dell-EMC, Styker and Pfizer. Supporting these companies, many of them have established European bases in the region for over 30 years, there is a vibrant community of Suppliers, many of whom are now exporting worldwide. The

Region is home to over 500,000 people, many of whom have re-located to take up employment opportunities. The Capital of the region, Cork City is a University City, with a student population of over 30,000 Day Students.

The Region has a vibrant Eco-System supporting Entrepreneurship, The Rubicon Centre part of the Cork Institute of Technology (CIT) is part of this Eco-System, which includes Public Funding Agencies (Enterprise Ireland –E.I and Local Enterprise Offices-LEO) , Cork City and County Councils, Chamber of Commerce and a number of Industry Associations including it@cork and Cork Electronics Industry Association.

The Rubicon Centre’s focus as part of this Eco-system is to provide support to Start-ups and Companies that want to scale through its Incubator supports. These include an Accelerator programme, New Frontiers which is a National Programme developing high potential start-ups with a focus on exporting. In recent years It has developed its own Female Entrepreneurship programmes, and other training programs such as PINC and Exxcel. In addition it has a Campus wide Undergraduate Programme, Student INC which supports students who want to develop a business during College with a view to having a career in Entrepreneurship on graduation.



Fig. 2 - StartInnShop partners during the study visit in Cork

Good practices

During StartInnShop peer to peer sessions, partners have exchanged their experience in supporting startups in their sales processes .

In particular, the following practices have been exchanged:

Partner	Practice	Contents
ASTER	Initiatives to help startups gain visibility in the market (for Emilia-Romagna startups)	<p>Several initiatives developed by ASTER to help startups gain visibility:</p> <p>+ Platform EmiliaRomagnaStartup: EmiliaRomagnaStartup is a reference platform for startup communities in Italy. Funded by the Emilia-Romagna regional government, it is a key instrument to diffuse policies and initiatives for the startup community. The objective when the platform was launched in 2011 was: to gather main regional players, improve the visibility of the 2 main interest groups: existing start-ups and business support organizations, guide new entrepreneurs and would be entrepreneurs in their process to start and develop a company, etc. Nowadays it is the key regional tool to mobilise, support and promote start-up growth inside and outside the region. It is a perfect mean to spot start-ups to collaborate with, invest in, work for etc. Startups in the platform have access to many opportunities e.g. a profile page, access to specific information on events, funding opportunities or available space, access to specific programmes and fairs, access to a pool of experts (tax and legal expert, IPR specialist etc.)</p> <p>+ Le Serre di ASTER acceleration programme: Selected start-ups are at the beginning of their business development stages. Le Serre di ASTER Acceleration Programme aims to help selected entrepreneurs build competences on how to launch a startup, develop relationships and collect feedback from possible customers and partners to develop a viable company in Emilia-Romagna</p> <p>+ ASTER Mentor board: Startups accessing this board have access to precious competences and contacts among important industrial groups and other organizations. Mentors provide advice on key areas (sector information, their organization working mechanisms</p>

		<p>etc.) and make links with their colleagues and external parties part of their own networks.</p> <p>+ Startup Internationalization programmes (e.g. Start in Canada)</p> <p>The objective is to provide a concrete internationalization opportunity for regional start-ups including preparation activities on internationalization process and on the country specific features, a check up activity together with country experts and organization of individual business meetings.</p>
	<p>International Office for Startups (for foreign startups)</p>	<p>The office is made available for startups and entrepreneurs to be coming from abroad. It is based in the incubator “Le Serre di ASTER”(see above for details)</p>
	<p>Emilia-Romagna in Silicon Valley (for regional startups)</p>	<p>ASTER builded a “two-way bridge” between Emilia-Romagna Region and Silicon Valley supporting startups in both ways (going and coming back). The goals are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creating an easy gate to access Silicon Valley for all the startups and all the incubators that are willing to expand their business in the United States. - Helping Emilia-Romagna startups in the internationalization of their businesses in the US through the search for partners and clients in Silicon Valley. - Supporting the pre-internationalization through programs that can help startups to not underestimate the consequences and the commitment to this kind of investment. - Studying and importing good practices with a specific focus on the cooperation between incubators and large established companies for open innovation activities. - Establishing a strong network of contacts to rely on for fund raising and business opportunities. - Spread Silicon Valley entrepreneurial mindset in Emilia-Romagna and Italy. - Activate a permanent connection between Emilia-Romagna and Silicon Valley to help startups move in both directions. <p>There are 2 groups of stakeholders: one in Emilia-Romagna and one in Silicon Valley. In Emilia-Romagna the community is mostly formed</p>

		<p>by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - companies - local governments - universities - incubators and accelerators <p>In Silicon Valley:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - accelerators - Italian community and representatives (e.g. the Consulate) - business consultants - Italian startups already active in the Bay Area - EIT - European Institute of Technology - office in Silicon Valley, with which ASTER work in close cooperation <p>Results</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - set up of a network in order to support Emilia-Romagna startups going to Silicon Valley - +40 Italian startups accompanied in Silicon Valley - set up of an office for Italian startups coming to the Bay Area as a “headquarter” of the program - activities and events in Emilia-Romagna to spread the Silicon Valley Mindset (e.g.. the Alumni association⁵)
<p>Laval Mayenne Technopole</p>	<p>NeoShop (for French and foreign startups)</p>	<p>Retail acceleration programme for startups consisting in physical shops and an e-shop where users can test their products. Market launch is shorter and feedback on product features and usability are collected to ensure the product is in line with customers’ needs.</p> <p>The Neoshop also helps develop a retail contact with appropriate retailers to implement this strategy. (see below for details).</p>
	<p>Sales, Growth Hacking and International Training (for regional startups)</p>	<p>LMT provides its startup community with different training programs aimed at developing commercial development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sales training - Growth Hacking - International training. <p>These topics are strategic for the start-ups to allow them to develop their markets. The format of the training is similar: 4 to 6 half-days group training</p>

⁵ <http://www.mindsetter.it/>

		and 1 to 2 half-day individual training. Each training session helps 4 to 8 entrepreneurs.
	Sales individual Training (for regional startups)	LMT has set up specific individual training sessions for start-ups to cope with specific difficulties in Sales development. Startups founders are often from technical backgrounds and experience great difficulties in operating the first prospection and conclude the first sales. To help them, a commercial consultant work with them for 5 to 10 days to train them and accompany them in every steps of the sale process. It goes from defining a sale strategy, to creating a prospect database, training in telephone prospection, accompanying the entrepreneur on his first contact with clients, working on proposals, participating to business negotiations.
	Seminars on startup sales: a service for incubators (for foreign startups)	LMT offers, through other incubators, seminars including training and coaching on startup distribution strategies, product development and sales. (see below for further details)
Rubicon Center	Market Entry Support for SME's into the UK market (for regional startups)	The Rubicon Centre established a contact with Warwick Science Park in 2014 through the Tesla Programme (EU Interreg Project). The purpose of the established contact was to provide a support structure for SMEs, particularly those in the Incubation Centre who wanted to gain market access to the UK, while at the same time having a similar level of supports in the UK as they would have in the Rubicon Centre. The support is broken into four areas: -Initial Market Research (Desk based) -Market Entry support (includes facilitation of 1:1 meetings -Set up of UK market operations to support market entry -Access to Angel and Govt. funding if required
	Support for developing business in Ireland (for Irish and foreign startups)	As part of Rubicon Center activities, the centre offers access to business contacts in Ireland. These services are currently made available to startups based in the innovation centre. A service focusing international users may be tested in StartInnShop context. (see below for further details)

Out of this initial shared selection, several “practices” have been identified and analysed more in detail as in line with StartInnShop focus and with a major contribution for developing the StartInnShop service offer.

In particular, 4 different “practices” have been selected. Practices are “ready to use” services that are currently available for international users or may be offered to international users for the first time as part of the StartInnShop offer:

- Hosting and tutorship for international startups in Bologna
- Selling support at the NeoShop in Laval
- Seminars on startup sales offered by LMT
- Support for developing and internationalize business in Ireland

An office for hosting foreign startups in Bologna

In 2016, ASTER has launched a new initiative dedicated startups: a temporary office to host foreign startups in its business incubator “Le Serre di ASTER”. The space is available for limited periods - 1 to 4 weeks - and is coupled with support services: organization of meetings with the startup community, with other types of potential partners (companies, research organizations, institutions) and sector experts. Agendas are organised in advance in collaboration with the startup and startups are supported during the meetings by ASTER staff.

ASTER office for international startups is dedicated to startup representatives wishing to explore business opportunities in Emilia-Romagna. The office is available for short periods, 1 to 4 weeks, and is based in the incubator “Le Serre di ASTER” that hosts Italian startups accessing an acceleration programme.

Offer

Startups will find here a work space, access to meeting rooms, restaurant and bar in a wonderful place: Giardini Margherita park next to Bologna town centre. ASTER will also provide guidance and organize meetings with key organizations: startups, business support organizations, institutions, enterprises, research organizations, sector experts etc.



ASTER S.cons.p.a.
Bologna, Italy

Le Serre di ASTER
via Castiglione 136
40136 Bologna
serredeigiardini@aster.it

www.aster.it



The NeoShop: the first startup accelerator for commercialization

Neoshop is a physical shop where startups can display and sell their products and get the feedbacks from the customers. Neoshop helps startups improve their products according to the customer's needs.

NeoShop selects products in 14 product families (baby, home, high tech, fashion, food, mobility, sport, outdoor, health, welfare, toy , accessories, leather goods, pets) and answers to a market need - need for startups for accessible distribution channels - with an innovative solution.

Products are sold in the online and offline shops, NeoShop taking a commission on each sale whereas shipments are under startup responsibility.

In addition, in order to ensure a long term retail strategy is in place, NeoShop has developed partnerships with main retailers in France that can be involved after an incubation period in the Neoshop system.

Currently, NeoShop is available in Laval and Montreal with physical shops as well as on line. The purpose is however to have an international network of Neoshop, in order to test the products on various international markets.

Launched in 2013, Neoshop is a commercial platform including a network of physical shops (Laval (France) and Montreal (Quebec) for the time being) and an online shop for startups from any country that are launching their physical product on the market. Neoshop helps the startups to adjust their products to the retail constraints, test the product in its shops and online and introduce the product to large or specialized retailers.

Before product launch, startups should contact Neoshop. After exchanging about the product and startup wishes, a contract is signed, the product is sent to Neoshop and the commercial launch will start. The basic services are free of charge for the startup.



Laval Mayenne Technopole
Laval, France

Neoshop Business Developer
tel. +33 2 43 53 81 56
neoshop@laval-technopole.fr

www.laval-technopole.fr
www.neoshop-laval.fr
www.boutique-neoshop.fr



Seminars on startup sales: a service for incubators

During StartInnShop, Laval Mayenne Technopole has developed a new service dedicated to support international startups with distribution process. It is organized with local business incubators for local startup communities and consists in one day seminar to assist startups in developing a retail strategy.

Startups launching innovative physical products for general consumers represent less than 10% of all startups present in incubators or accelerator programs. Therefore, the specialized skills required to introduce startups on their market and penetrate large retailers are not always present in each incubator.

Laval Mayenne Technopole through its Neoshop program is providing to European incubators a 1 day seminar at the incubator premises including:

- A masterclass called “The keys to retail access for startups”
- A series of 1-to-1 coaching sessions with 6 startups
- Access to Neoshop services for qualified startups (see card Neoshop)

This service to incubators and accelerators is provided free of charge. Only the logistics costs (travel and hotel) will be charged to the incubator.

Laval Mayenne Technopole
Laval, France

Neoshop Business Developer
tel. +33 2 43 53 81 56
neoshop@laval-technopole.fr

www.laval-technopole.fr
www.neoshop-laval.fr
www.boutique-neoshop.fr



Support for developing business in Ireland

As an innovation centre for entrepreneurs, the Rubicon Centre to help, encourage and give support to people who present a unique idea or highlight a market niche which they believe they can target.

In essence, the Centre's role as an incubator is to assist the formation and growth of early stage, knowledge intensive businesses, by providing physical space and in-house management support, along with access to advice and on support from Cork Institute of Technology resources. The Centre aims to stimulate an environment of creativity and innovation with a continual focus of nurturing the growth of knowledge based business and commercial research in the South West Region of Ireland, home to a vibrant technology based economy.

Services offered include: soft landing, access to local eco-system and assistance.

The Rubicon Centre is an incubator based in Cork City in South West Ireland. It is part of the Cork Institute of Technology Eco-system, and allows companies access to both commercial and technical Supports in a campus environment.

The Centre offers a modern and dynamic working environment, where new start-up companies can find their feet as they launch into the business world.

Services offered include:

- Soft Landing for Entrepreneurs interested in exploring new opportunities in Ireland
- Access to Entrepreneurship Eco-System of South-West Region
- Assistance in Accessing Potential Market Opportunities in ICT, Medical Devices, Pharmachem sectors
- Introductions to SME's seeking Business partners for R&D and Market Access Opportunities for European Roll-out
- Support for Overseas Entrepreneurs looking to Establish in Ireland.

The Rubicon Centre

CIT Campus, Bishopstown
Cork, Ireland

Paul Healy

Innovation Centre Manager
tel. +353 (0)21 4928901
paul.healy@rubiconcentre.ie

www.rubiconcentre.ie



Chapter 3. Sales support for start-ups

1. Features of those services

The main difficulty a startup meets in its life is clearly linked to the challenge related on **how to sell the product and create a sustainable revenue stream**, so to allow to further develop product offerings, build infrastructure and hardware, repay the investors (both debt and venture capital), and find out a rewardable business model. Quite often - and this is very often the case of the hi-tech/knowledge-based/creative startups, whose teams are built by technologists or creative professionals - startups are not able to design a scalable and effective way to go to market. This is also due to the fact that innovative startup firmly believe their invention is good enough to sell by itself and sales doesn't become a focus of attention.

Follows here a list of questions that has been pointed out by Tien Tzuo, founder of Zuora⁶ to clarify the importance of having a well defined go-to-market strategy:

- What type of sales force or distribution model should you be building?
- Does your market have that many customers?
- Does your value proposition justify the price points you need to hit?
- How much should you be spending on marketing vs sales?

Through a concrete support in starting the selling and in analyzing the feedback received, the service StartInnShop designed aimed at supporting startups in finding the right answers.

The principle that inspired the service design is to support startups in their practice to effectively sell the product. As a new business, a startup that wants to break into a market - especially when it comes to sell an innovative product or service - needs to have an extremely accurate approach, a very carefully and detailed sales plan and strategy on how to carry the product to the market. the most important lesson to learn is to “Ensure that you are meeting the needs of existing customers”, as suggested by James Caan, chairman of the Startup Loans Company.⁷

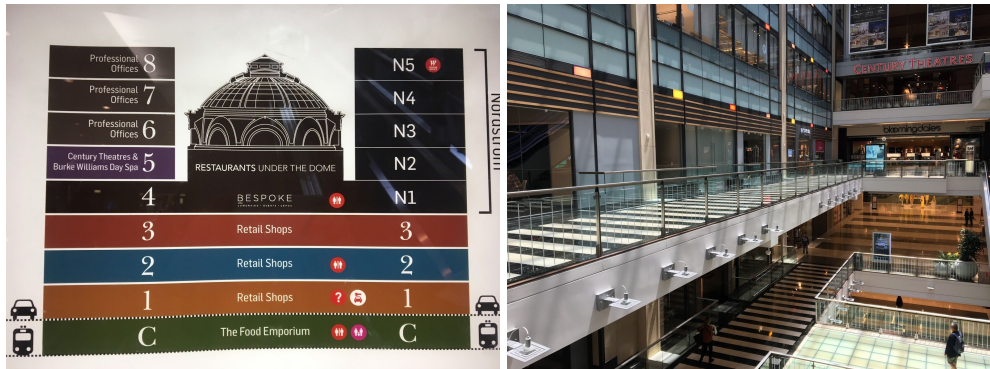
Experiences outside the partnership

Case study outside the EU: Bespoke, a sale support system in Silicon Valley

⁶ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/valleyvoices/2015/07/17/every-startups-go-to-market-strategy>

⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/small-business-network/2013/may/22/how-to-sell-your-product>

Bespoke⁸ is a coworking space and an accelerator program dedicated mainly to retail tech startups with several pop-up shop spaces that look out onto a huge mall. It is located in the 4th floor of the Westfield Shopping Center, a 3500 sqm mall in downtown San Francisco, the largest in the city, which is active since March 2015.



Bespoke main services are 3: coworking, demo (pop-up shop spaces), events. It is primarily a coworking space, hosting startup that deals with retail tech (e-commerce, software solutions, to hardware gadgets). The "acceleration" service consists in a networking activity connect the startups hosted in the space with the several opportunities for selling and expand offered by the Westfield's Innovation Center. The full list of the service available is described here:

<http://www.bespokesf.co/Bespoke%20Coworking.pdf>




As regards the shops, there are two different models:

- **Permanent shops** for hi-tech gadgets in collaboration with Indiegogo - a crowdfunding platform - made by showcases at the coworking entrance that are open on the mall and may host both products from the startups which are partners of Bespoke, and from startups that made a crowdfunding campaign on Indiegogo.
- **Pop up shops** for startups who want to test the market by trying to sell their product to the mall clients: within the Bespoke premises, 4 meeting rooms are modifiable to open out and become temporary shops.

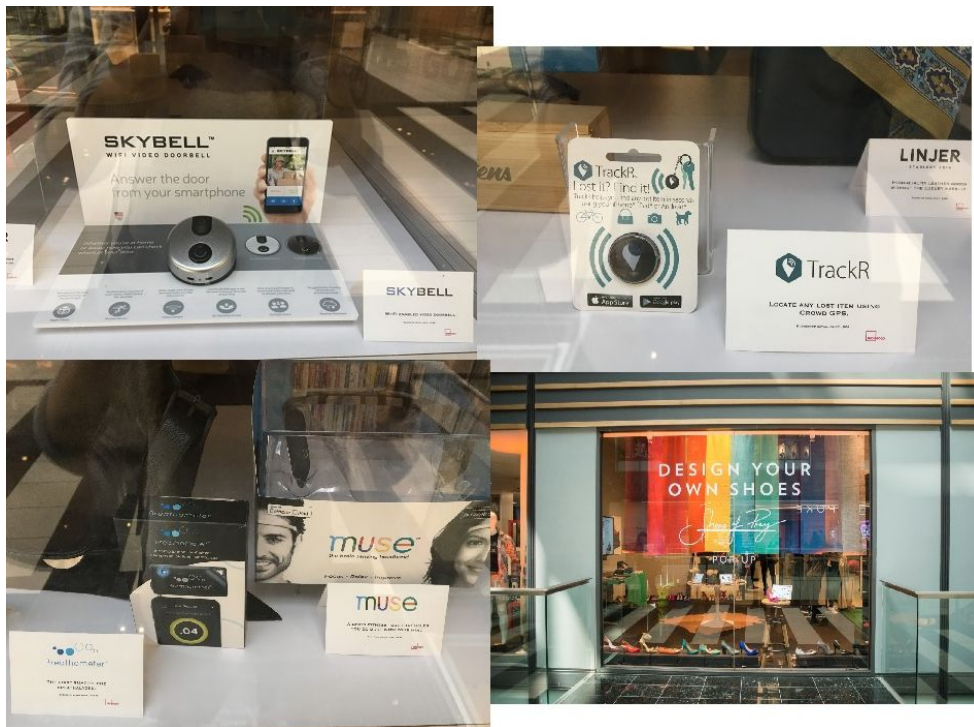
⁸ <http://www.bespokesf.co/>



Usually, this second kind of activity is done in conjunction with great events organized by Bespoke so to ensure a greater audience and visits to the spaces. On average a startup keeps the pop-up shop for a maximum of 2 weeks and, beside the use of the premises, it can benefit from additional services that are described in the following table.

POP-UP ZONE (DREAMFORCE HIGH SEASON)		
SUCCESS STORIES		
<p>RAW SPACE</p> <p>Offering - \$3,000/day + 400 sq/ft activation footprint + 55" LED wall display + Client designs and implements activation</p> <p>BOW + DRAPE</p> <p><i>Bespoke provided Bow + Drape the perfect setting to bring their e-commerce brand to life in a brick and mortar retail setting. With their cool and quirky clothing designs, Bow + Drape drew in quite the crowd during Bespoke's grand opening event. Using just our square footage, Bow + Drape filled the space with glitter, glitz and happy shoppers.</i></p> <p>Results Product awareness, brand recognition and new market sales.</p> 	<p>PLUG & PLAY</p> <p>Offering - \$5,000/day + RAW SPACE, PLUS: + Consultation with pop-up expert + Access to template fixtures and displays + Hands on support to help your team create an efficient pop-up</p> <p>SMART HOME SF</p> <p><i>With Bespoke's templated setup, including crate walls and curated furniture, Smart Home SF created a warm and comfortable 'home of the future' to showcase four companies' new home tech. Smart Home SF brought together the retail tech community in celebration of the future of home tech.</i></p> <p>Results Multiple start ups that had collaboratively participated saw 3x online sales, made connections with local investors that had passed by and gained useful consumer feedback.</p> 	<p>CUSTOM</p> <p>Offering - \$8,000/day + PLUG & PLAY, PLUS: + Creative curation of space + Design layout + merchandising + Brand storytelling + White glove support</p> <p>SHOES OF PREY</p> <p><i>Shoes of Prey worked closely with Bespoke's design and retail experts to create a fully immersive storefront where shoppers could create their own custom footwear. Using curated materials and merchandise, Shoes of Prey became a destination in the Westfield San Francisco Centre.</i></p> <p>Results Lifestyle branded interaction, diversified revenue stream, connect with customers offline, incubate a new idea and allow consumers new product discovery.</p> 

Follows here some examples of the high-tech startup products that are exposed in the pop shops:



Chapter 4. StartInnShop approach

As recommended by several experts, “Figuring out how you go to market is not a one-time exercise for a new company; it should be an ongoing process, constantly informed by a deeper and deeper understanding of customer needs and how your product can meet them⁹” That is why the objective of the pilot action has been the definition of an integrated and interactive new service to help local startups (1) sell their products and (2) be supported to develop business in other partner regions.

The service has been developed by the 3 StartInnShop partners through the exchange of experiences and sharing already existing tools.

StartInnShop service package contents

StartInnShop partners have defined a series of steps to implement the new service to support startups selling their products abroad:

⁹ <https://hbr.org/2016/06/the-go-to-market-approach-startups-need-to-adopt>

Step 1 - Preparation in regions

Pre-selection in each region of startups with a product or service ready for **internationalization** and preparation support for meeting with partner organizations.

The pre-selection includes a meeting where product development stage, capacity of internationalization and objectives are analysed.

The regional preparation also includes the identification additional opportunities for implementing the sales/international strategy.

A questionnaire has been developed to check product maturity and internationalization levels (see annex 1).

Step 2 – International contacts

Meetings with partners for feedback on market strategy are organized. Meetings - organised using web tools - last around 1 hour and are focused on product features. The objective is to provide market information, business opportunities and identify possible contacts for business partnerships.

Follow-up sessions with specific information or introduction to possible partners are then organised.

Step 3 - One Day Market Access Seminars

A one day market access seminar is organised for a group of local startups in presence of international partners.

Those events are centred on startup products/services and include individual sessions to demonstrate the products or prototypes for international partners to give feedback on product development and potential partners in their countries.

Step 4 – Mobility Actions

Mobility can regard either companies' representatives or physical products mobility. Startups can access physical infrastructures and services:

- **Neoshop - the retail accelerator:** Start-ups can commercialise their products in Neoshop, the innovative boutique for startup products and access additional services.
- **International Startup office in Bologna:** Startups can access an office and support services for short periods.
- **Support for developing the Irish market:** Rubicon Center supports foreign startups find partners and opportunities for establishing or selling in Ireland.

Step 5 – Collect feedback from startups

A followup activity is organised with startups to evaluate the impact of each action.

Inclusion of companies

The inclusion of companies in the pilot service test was made over 2 actions:

1 - identification of priorities for startup inclusion

Priorities regard: sectors, maturity and market focus.

Sectors:

The start-ups were identified considering their market segment. The following is to be considered:

Cork (Ireland)	Main sectors are: Food, ICT new forms of media, medical devices and engineering automation
Mayenne (France)	Food, ICT, creative companies,
Emilia-Romagna (Italy)	food, mechanics, medical devices, creative companies.

Maturity:

Mainly start-ups, as the three partners are business incubators.

In particular, the following conditions are requested:

1. Trading or Pre-trading
2. Possible prototype
3. Customer segment identified
4. Possible website developed

Market focus:

Since its main field of interest is related to the support in supporting selling procedures, LMT decided to focus its test actions in B2C startups with ready to sell products and in B2B companies, in particular in the ICT sector.

ASTER was committed to support B2B companies interested in developing networks and open innovation programs, particularly those startups willing to establish contacts with the very rich industrial framework in Emilia-Romagna and with the startup community in the region.

Rubicon Centre also was also committed in supporting B2B practices and assisting technical competences development in cooperation with the Cork Technology Institute.

2 - Inclusion of companies in basic service (Service Step 1 and 2)

Companies that have been included by the partners belonged to their startup communities. Most of them were already involved by the partners in support/acceleration programmes and/or were hosted in local incubating facilities. Initial services - first exchange meetings with feedback on market strategy - have been provided to all included startups.

3 - Inclusion of companies in further services

For further services - e.g. access to facilities as the NeoShop or the office for international startups in Bologna - specific agreements have been developed and a tailor made offer (one for each partner, on the basis of the services that each of them provides, freely or with fees) have been negotiated directly between the international partner and the startup.

Participants in the pilot service

During the pilot service, a total of 20 startups or teams with a business idea have been included in the various stages:

Region	Number of included startups/entrepreneurs to be
Emilia-Romagna	9
Cork	5
Mayenne	6

Those startups and future entrepreneurs have accessed (at least) an initial meeting with a foreign StartInnShop partner, that took place contemporary with the study visit organized during the project lifetime. The majority of them have accessed new contacts and explored networking opportunities in partner regions, and some of them are also distributing or negotiating the distribution of their products through the different opportunities made available by the consortium, and particularly through the Neoshop.

Here follows a list of the most relevant concrete results that have been achieved by the most promising startups included in the pilot action.

- **Playwood** (<http://www.playwood.it>) is a startup based in Reggio Emilia (Italy) developing and distributing an innovative connector to be used for building furniture. After a meeting in Bologna during which the team illustrated the product innovative features, Playwood products have been selected for Step 4 testing and are currently being tested in NeoShop in Laval.



- **NeroFermento** (<https://www.nerofermento.it/>) is a startup based in Ravenna (Italy) producing and distributing fermented vegetables through a continue research, developing technologies from softwares to hardware. NeroFermento first available product is their “black garlic”, a processed garlic with incredible taste and health impact properties. NeroFermento was presented in a NeoShop event in Laval in June and in now distributed in the shop.
- **Re-find** (www.re-find.org) based in Bologna (Italy) works with recovered materials that can't be recycled and would end up in a landfill. it gives them a new life, shape, and purpose. One of its key products, “Meraky”, is a bag collection with an exclusive design and made from coffee bags. Re-Find has received feedback on product features, packaging and pricing and is currently negotiating with NeoShop the distribution of their next bags collection in France.

- **FireMole** (<https://firemole.com>) based in Cork (Ireland) is a young company that is developing a range of innovative fire safety devices that can protect people and their property.
- **RashR** (<http://rashr.com/>) based in Cork (Ireland) designs and produces clothing for water sports. Rashr vests are already available on Neoshop on line shop and in the permanent boutique in Laval.
- **SRL** (www.srlresearch.com) Sensory Consumer Services for the Pharmaceutical Sector - who works to improve drug palatability and enhance patient acceptability and compliance, using sensory science and it is based in Cork, found a potential commercial contact in Emilia-Romagna. In particular, contacts have been opened through the ASTER High Technology Network with the BioPharmaNet-Tech Laboratory. Opportunities are currently being explored.
- **Ventina** (www.20tina.com) based in Laval (France) designs and commercializes solutions to dry clothes. They innovate on a domestic gesture repeated by millions of women and men, several times per week. Users, their gestures and their environment are placed in the centre of Ventina's development. Ventina wishes to develop the Italian market and will benefit from a study trip organized by ASTER in Bologna.
- **Dressing Gallery** (www.jaimemarobe.com) based in Laval (France) designs and commercializes bags and storage boxes for textiles and precious and/or old accessories including weddings dresses, christening dresses, dress wear formal wear, men's suits. The Italian market is a target market as it is the major market for wedding dresses in Europe.
- **Genius Mundi** (www.genius-mundi.com) creates new concepts, spaces, products and personalized services. They wish to explore the Italian market and are interested to benefit from the office in Bologna and some introduction.
- **Soyooz** (www.soyooz-pro.com) is an innovative online referral service for technical products (image, sound, photo, computers, appliances ...). ASTER provided various resources where the company can find customers to be addressed.
- **Shortways** (www.shortways.fr) main product is a virtual assistant to help companies employees to make their daily tasks (accounting, finance, business management, etc.) by providing the good information at the right time, directly into their business software. A contact was established with a system integrator .
- **Seaproven** (www.seaproven.com) is a company specialized in the Research and Development in the Maritim Drone sector. They have

developed 2 vessels for surveying the coasts and realizing rescue actions. The company has been presented to the Maritim College in Cork, where a real interest was found.

Chapter 5. StartInnShop service pack to support start-up sell their products

Starting from the service package developed jointly defined in StartInnShop, there are some particular aspects to consider and adjustments to make for the implementation in each region.

Recommendations for implementation in Emilia-Romagna

- **Support for regional startups**

The high participation of Italian startups in the pilot initiative has proved there is a need from startups to be supported in accessing sales competences and contacts abroad. Startups who have participated in direct meetings with Rubicon Center and Laval Mayenne Technopole have highly appreciated the feedback provided by the experts on product features and sales strategy. Feedback regarded all product aspects - including technology, packaging, product usage etc. - as well as possible contacts for distribution in Ireland and France.

Recommendation: Organisation of frequent meetings - to be included in the ordinary activity of each acceleration batch - for startups to demonstrate their products with experts, with the scope to identify product features to improve for being “sales ready”. Local support for implementing advice collected from those experts sessions should be implemented in follow-up sessions.

- **Support for international startups**

Aster supports international startups using the “International Startup Office” at the incubator “Le Serre di ASTER”. Startups using this space stay 1 to 4 weeks in the office having access to an office and support from ASTER personnel. Support consists in organizing meetings with potential partners and customers, accompanying startup promoters to those meetings, organizing presentation and coaching sessions.

In StartInnShop, support was provided through meetings online and follow-up sessions including local contacts. A form has been implemented to check startups features and expectations.

Recommendation: ASTER support for international startups shall be enriched and may include: remote coaching sessions (using StartInnShop approach and tools) as well as access to the “International Startup Office” and connected services.

- **Diffuse the culture for sales support**

Sales support for startups currently offered in business support organizations in Emilia-Romagna mainly consists in the organization of individual meetings. These services are mainly indicated for business to business startups and particularly time consuming. Other services include helping startups participate in events (fairs and sector events) that have a high impact on startup visibility but are also very hard to afford in terms of preparation and follow-up both for business support operators and startups. Other services to help startups develop their products are currently missing in Emilia-Romagna business support organizations, whereas a specific policy action is currently being studied by the regional government to boost the go-to-market readiness of the most promising regional startups.

The service offer may be enriched with the experiences studied in StartInnShop and in particular through diffusing Laval Mayenne Technopole experience in Neoshop and sales workshops as well as other experiences available in other countries.

Recommendation: ASTER shall further develop access to opportunities for startups to reach potential customers. ASTER shall promote tools as Neoshop among regional startups as well as among those startup support organizations members of the EmiliaRomagnaStartUp community.

- **Organize “Market Access Day Seminars”**

The service was offered to a selection of local companies and business ideas as a pilot service. Participation was high when a meeting with partners from Laval and Cork was organized.

Recommendation: The service shall include “Market Access Day Seminars” organised locally with the involvement of partners from other regions.

- **Participation of companies to StartInnShop services**

With some startups, the service ended after the first coaching meeting whereas follow-up actions were planned and third parties had been involved. The fact that startups are consolidating their business model, still developing their domestic market and count on limited human and financial resources is an issue to consider when planning the service.

Recommendation: The service shall include a variety of support - from feedback meetings to access to an office - but it should be modular: it shall include initial meetings for first feedback and, in case of interest and available time and resources, include other meetings and services.

- **Ensure the service is provided in the medium term**

Collaboration in the StartInnShop consortium has proved to be fruitful for all partners in the objective to enrich their offer for local startups. The partners have agreed to pursue this collaboration in the long run enlarging the network to similar organizations.

Recommendation: A model of agreement has been developed by ASTER to enable the collaboration to be consolidated with organizations supporting startups in other countries (See Annex 2).

Recommendations for implementation in Laval

- **Sale for International hardware startup**

During StartInnshop program, Neoshop has hosted 2 Irish hardware startups from Cork and 3 Italian hardware startups from Bologna. LMT made the first sale in France and put the startups in contact with retail companies.

Recommendation: Continue to test this first startups and grow the number of international startups using Neoshop in order to have more impact with the retailers; reduce shipping/mobility costs for the startups, by bringing several startups from the same region/country.

- **Seminars on startup sales**

During the peer-to-peer meetings in Cork and Bologna, the Neoshop program managers from Laval Mayenne Technopole have analysed distribution strategies and product development implemented in selected startups. A new approach based on the product and the retailers needs have been provided to the participating startups that have seen a great interest in the feedback received very often for the first time.

Recommendation: organize some meetings with hardware startups from Europe to test this new approach over a longer time period.

Recommendations for implementation in Cork

- **Supports for Existing Companies-Post Incubation**

The pilot initiative has already proved useful to the Rubicon Centre and its Eco-System in the South West of Ireland, by providing a platform to support companies who can't access the supports of the Government backed Agency, Enterprise Ireland, who's remit is to support Start-ups with a €1m turnover and more than 10 employees. The Rubicon has an Alumni of 400 Companies which

have been supported by its Start-up Programmes such as New Frontiers and Exxcel

Recommendation: Continue to Market to Companies post New Frontiers and other Start-up supports of Rubicon

- **Supports for Companies outside the Incubator**

The South West region of Ireland has a hinterland of over 36.000 Business Entities who currently have no access to this type of support, and who are not receiving any scaling or supports to maintain their operations in Ireland. The pilot did not address this cohort of companies, but the Incubator is contacted on a regular basis by these companies looking for help. This Initiative would be useful to them, and also allow the Incubator to connect with a larger Regional audience. In addition, these companies would be in a better financial position to invest their resources in looking to new markets, and may have some existing export experience.

Recommendation: 1. Market to this group of companies 2. Develop and Deliver Laval Style Sales Programme before Selection. 3. Consider Additional Partner from South West Ireland.

- **Ability of Companies to Support Activities of StartInnShop**

New Start-ups require first customers, however if the First Customers are located outside of the Irish market (which is very small) this may provide additional challenges. From the pilot, the Companies gained valuable market knowledge, but many of them, had the opportunity scaled outside of the programme, they would have had problems supporting the activity. This challenge would felt most in lack of Sales & Marketing experience, availability of localised marketing material and ability to fund such an opportunity.

Recommendation: Ensure All Companies have sufficient funding and Marketing Materials available before been selected for such an Initiative

- **Marketing of this Initiative to Companies**

The selection of companies for the pilot used the existing Client List of all partners. To encourage Companies to consider this model as a landbridge to export markets, and to ensure that all companies understand the requirements of them, upon entering this programme.

Recommendation: Hold One Day Market Access Day Seminars at each of the partner locations using personnel who will be engaging with them in the target locations. (Similar to Tesla EU programme run with Laval previously.)

Companies which engaged with the pilot gained both market knowledge and also an understanding of how the buyers requirements needed to be met. For example, in the case of the Rasher Company from the Rubicon accessing the French retail

market, the amount of retail knowledge gained has provided benefits not only for looking at the French market, but retailing in general. This was because personnel in the NeoShop in Laval had prior retail experience plus the contacts to access them. Furthermore, the initial meeting of the company in Ireland by NeoShop provided a platform to kick this support off.

Recommendation: Exchange of Expertise of Different partners on visits is very useful to clarify thinking and strategy for Company development. This should be used to review each other projects, regardless of the outcome to export to a partner company or not. Partner meetings to exchange, and review projects every six months.

Conclusions

StartInnShop has enabled to build a modular service for accompanying innovative, knowledge-based and creative startups in adjusting their products according to the market's needs and securing the first sales. StartInnShop has had different positive outputs.

As far as the direct project beneficiaries are regarded:

- (1) It has enabled the partnership exchange on specific services and improve their own services and routines as regards the support to startups.
- (2) It has enabled three organizations with similar scopes and well connected in their local ecosystems co-create a new service integrating and reshaping tools and services.

StartInnShop has also had many positive outputs on the users of the pilot service: StartInnshop service has been tested on different startups - based in the 3 partner regions - interested in developing business contacts abroad. Out of the 20 startups and entrepreneurs included in this test, several of those have effectively found opportunities to diffuse their products/identify potential partners during the pilot.

This positive results has increased the confidence that supporting startups developing distribution contacts abroad is a service to further investigate and to further build on.

Annex 1 - Questionnaire for inclusion in the service

Section 1:

Promoters Name:

Company Name:

Full Address:

E-mail Address:

Contact:

Website:

Point of Contact (English speaking liaison)

Section 2:

Business Description

Would your product be viable in the Italian/French/Irish Market?

—
Have you located a customer in this market or any prior experience of exporting? Give examples.

—
Have you material available (Country specific language)?

Do you want to sell direct or through an agent?

What are the barriers you are experiencing to grow your business at present?

How do you plan on making your business sustainable?

Section 3:

Have you sufficient funding for your business to develop your business for the next 12 months?

How much funding have you allocated towards this initiative?

How do you intend on receiving your funding?

What skills do you have to benefit your business?

What skill are you hoping to gain to help develop the business further?

Do you have a current business plan?

Have you access to support from other support agencies?

Annex 2a - Model of cooperation agreement

ORGANIZATION, hereinafter referred to as ACRONYM, represented by NAME TITLE with its head office in ADDRESS, REGION, COUNTRY.

and

ASTER S. Cons. p. A., hereinafter referred as **ASTER**, represented by Mr **Fabio Rangoni**, President, with its head office in Via Gobetti 101 - 40129 Bologna, Italy.

A. Background

[ASTER](#) is the Consortium for innovation and technology transfer of Emilia-Romagna. Its partners are the Emilia-Romagna Regional Government, the six Universities and the National Research Centres located in the region (the National Research Council-CNR, the Italian National Agency for New Technologies, Energy and Sustainable Economic Development-ENEA, the National Institute for Nuclear Physics-INFN), the Regional Union of Chambers of Commerce, working in collaboration with regional Business Associations and Innovation Centres. ASTER works in collaboration with enterprises, universities, research centres and institutions for the development of the innovation ecosystem of the territory.

As regards startup support, together with the Emilia-Romagna Regional Government ASTER promotes [EmiliaRomagnaStartup](#), the main regional initiative for startups or future entrepreneurs. EmiliaRomagnaStartup gathers innovative startups and business support organizations (public and private: Incubators, Innovation Centres and Chambers of Commerce); its services range from support on classical themes related to innovative entrepreneurship to specialized consulting, business development, internationalization and support for fund raising.

Since 2015 ASTER has desks in San Francisco - in cooperation with the [EIT Digital](#) - and in Bruxelles, to promote internationalization and mobility activities.

Le [Serre di ASTER](#) (ASTER Greenhouses) is the place where the ASTER Startup Dept. hosts and supports startups from Bologna and surroundings through acceleration programs and includes an office dedicated to international hosting.

[partner description - max 20 lines]

B. Objectives of the Agreement

Maintain and reinforce a mutual satisfactory working relation between the signing institutions encouraging **the exchange of experiences and knowledge, as well as potential collaboration in other projects and initiatives** primary in the field of business creation and startup support, but also in other domains related to innovation and business development.

Support companies in their internationalization. Specific facilities [see below] are accessible to companies or teams with a business idea that are directed beneficiaries of services provided by the signatories of this agreement.

Each partner specifies [point C]:

1. the target companies addressed
2. the conditions for accessing the support services. Note: Whereas fees are not specified in detail, services are intended free of charge.

C. Commitment

Signing partners are committed to provide services described below for the business landing of companies and team with a business idea. Partners commit to keep their portfolio of business landing services updated by noticing each other any changes that may occur to the services described.

Both Partners act as endorsement institutions, filtering and directing those companies that comply with the maturity levels for setting up abroad.

Both Partners reserve the right to provide the softlanding services to those companies that present the maturity level for setting up abroad.

Both Partners commit in communication of the available services, resulting from this agreement, through its communication channels.

Both Partners have the right of refusing the request of hosting, providing each other clear justification.

The Hosting partner will decide, in accordance with the beneficiary of the hosting service, the dates of the stay.

The Sending partner shall sign a presentation letter stating that the startup/project team requiring to access the hosting services is currently accelerated or benefitting from its services.

Partners may use the form reported in Annex 1 to collect information from start-ups/teams with a business idea willing to benefit from the services.

In detail:

ASTER service offer:

Target	Teams with a business idea Startups willing to expand their business in Emilia Romagna region
Tutorship	A reference person in charge of the reception, that will follow the company in its landing process in the Emilia-Romagna region. The person of reference will assess the specific needs of the company/future entrepreneurs and will draft a plan of activities aimed at responding effectively to such needs, that shall be validated at least a week before the arrival by the company/future entrepreneurs.
Facilities	Access to the office at Le Serre di ASTER reserved for international mobility: a fully equipped work space with a wi-fi connection, access to meeting rooms, restaurant and bar in the same area. Startups/would-be entrepreneurs are hosted for 1 week free of charge and can stay up to four weeks, paying a fee of

	50,00€ per week starting from the second week of stay.
Networking	<p>First contacts with the innovation ecosystem and the relevant local actors for innovation and business support services: major companies, start-ups, investors, technology parks, Universities, research centres, institutions, public authorities, associations, etc.,</p> <p>Under request of the hosted startup: identification of potential consultants and experts within ASTER databases to support the business development and organization of meetings/exchanges with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Meetings with startups hosted in the accelerator or members of EmiliaRomagnaStartUp community o Meetings with business support organizations and institutions, belonging to EmiliaRomagnaStartUp o Meetings with other organizations belonging to ASTER networks (i.e Industrial Research Labs, FabLabs etc) o Contacts with ASTER experts, including specialists in business modelling, in specific business sectors and other topics related to innovation o Identification of potential consultants and experts within ASTER service providers databases to support their business development o Participation in trainings and events whenever possible

(Partner service offer)

[service]	[description]
[service]	[description]
[service]	[description]

D. Monitoring and Evaluation of services

The quality standards of the service offered may be assessed through an Evaluation form (see Annex 1b) that will be filled-in by the beneficiaries of the softlanding services within a month after the stay. The hosting partners is in charge of collecting the Evaluation Form from the beneficiaries and of sharing it with the sending partner.

The results from the Evaluation forms filled in by beneficiaries will serve as basis for the Protocol of Agreement review.

E. Duration:



The duration of this agreement will be of 3 years, starting from the date of the signature.
This duration will be extended if agreed by the parts.
The agreement will end immediately in case one of the partners requires it.

Annex 2b - Template to collect feedback from beneficiaries

Beneficiaries of the hosting services should rate provided services

Name of the hosting institution:

Name of the sending institution:

Name of the startup/team with a business idea:

Sector:

Is this your first internationalization experience? YES / NO

How many days you have been hosted?

Questions should be answered using a 1 to 10 scale, where 10 is excellent.

1. Overall level of satisfaction:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. Indicate which are the services that you have used and rate their quality:

Tutorship	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Business agendas in your territory:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Softlanding office spaces:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Networking	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Other services (please specify)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

3. Indicate which has been the response time in days for:

Receiving first feedback: _____ Days

Deliver the service: _____ Days

4. Did the service received match your expectations?
YES / NO

Explain:

5. Rate the project manager of the softlanding service

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Suggestions for improvement: