



INTERCOUNTRY BUSINESS INCUBATOR
N E T W O R K

OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

Invaluable input to the creation of IBI Net Operational Guidelines was given by all persons who agreed to be interviewed for the purpose of this document: namely, representatives of all the involved IBI Net project partners and related incubators, selected number of Steering Committee representatives, external experts in fields of business incubation, innovation, start-up support, a start-up entrepreneur who has recently graduated from Startupbootcamp event in Copenhagen, as well as an expert of the European Commission funded European Territorial Cooperation programme support and information agency INTERACT. In total the Consultant conducted 19 interviews and wishes to thank everyone who participated and contributed. Full list of the interviewees can be found in “Annex 2 – List of Interviewees”. The Consultant combined opinions collected during interviews with its own expertise and relevant literature and secondary information on the Internet to create the Operational Guidelines largely in form of recommendations that should guide further developments of IBI Net over initial years after the end of Interreg funding for the current project.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BI	Business incubator
BSR	Baltic Sea Region
CA	Creative Andrejsala, business incubator
CC Elblag	City Commune of Elblag
ETC	European Territorial Cooperation
EUSBSR	European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region
Hedmark CC	Hedmark City Council
ICH	Innovation Centre Hedmark
ICT	Information and communication technologies
LRBSC	Leningrad Region Business Support Center
RRBDI	Riga Region Business Development Incubator
RRP	Riga Planning Region
RTU	Riga Technical University
Teknikdalen	Teknikdalen Foundation
TZV	Center of Technology Western-Pomerania

1. FUTURE CO-OPERATION FRAMEWORK

To cover areas, formats and tools for cooperation of IBI Net members after completion of the project financed by the BSR Programme 2007 -2013.

1.1. BACKGROUND SITUATION

Currently with the support of the funding of the Baltic Sea Region Programme 2007-2013 the IBI Net project has gained a good momentum. The project partners have got to know each other through cross-border experience exchange visits. Periodic workgroup and steering meetings are being held, project tasks are being completed and everybody is looking forward to the final project conference/forum in May 2012.

It is important that this momentum is not lost after completion of the project. There are at least two preconditions that need to be met for this to happen – (1) tangible and actual benefits that all the involved partners can gain in future from cooperation be it through the Association or informal network and (2) a leadership team and structure needs to be in place that facilitates and coordinates the future activities of IBI Net.

The latter precondition shall be solved by the established IBI Net Association that has seven co-founding members of which five are the IBI Net project partners. However, without addressing the former precondition sustainability of the IBI Net initiative can be put at risk. Hence, these Guidelines try to address this issue and suggest the ways how to deliver true value for the current and future IBI Net members.

1.2. VALUE PROPOSAL OF IBI NET

There is a number of already existing networks of cooperation and support structures for business incubators and SME development on both national and international levels. On the national level there are organizations such as UKBI and ADT whereas on the international area there are EBN, IASP, EuroOffice-Services, EEN, etc. Most of these organizations either operate nationally or have a very broad international focus on a large number of members.

In this context the strength of IBI Net as already acknowledged by the existing project partners and also supported by the Consultant lies in the two following aspects. Firstly, IBI Net is an international structure, but with a regional focus and, secondly, it is a specialized network of BIs as opposed to broader networks comprising Science Parks, regional development agencies and BIs just as one of their members.

The unique value proposal of IBI Net can be summarized by the following points:

- *by incubators for incubators* – events, projects, knowledge transfer issues are targeted for business incubators and expertise is provided by people directly involved or competent in BI matters;
- *focus on the Baltic Sea Region (BSR)* – geographical focus and proximity provides for greater relevance of common regional issues, ease of physical access and commutation, as well as possibilities for further project funding from the European Territorial Co-operation (ETC) programs funded from the EU and/or national sources;

- *manageable size and somewhat personalized network* – since the greatest value of IBI Net lies in the network and learning possibilities in-between members, hence, it is important that the partners know each other rather in-depth not just formally, in order not to dilute the network through attraction of as many members as possible just for the sake of enlarging their number.

The Consultant recommends that at least in the next couple of years (2012-2013), while IBI Net establishes its credibility and name after the end of project funding, the partners keep this value proposal in mind when choosing the future cooperation areas, lobbying the network and attracting new members.

1.3. MAIN COOPERATION AREAS

The Consultant has identified the following main cooperation areas that the IBI Net members shall focus their future cooperation:

1.3.1.1. Knowledge & best practice exchange on the BI management issues

Already cited as one of the key takeaways from the current project, the possibility to learn from partners in the BSR in the future is what attracts partners to IBI Net. Most of the learning needs are on the Eastern side of the Baltic Sea, whereas most of the competence lies amongst the Swedish and German partners. The two most quoted themes for learning are: (1) coaching and (2) overall organization model and process steps of business incubation. The learning needs are discussed in more depth in section “2.Competence and capacity building”.

1.3.1.2. Monitoring and evaluation methods and tools for incubation of the companies

Another demand identified from the side of BIs especially those on the Eastern shore of the Baltic Sea is a systemized and somewhat automated way how to select and evaluate the incubation companies throughout the incubation process. Problems faced by the less experienced incubators are how to diagnose and monitor appropriateness of the companies for the incubation purposes based on the data that they provide in their business plans and from the actual performance reports throughout the incubation stage.

An ICT tool to serve these needs is currently being built by the German partner. See more on this under subsection “1.5.Tools for cooperation”.

Overall, the topic is relevant and demanded by BIs; thus, it is recommended that IBI Net develops methodologies and fine-tunes appropriate tools in this area.

1.3.1.3. Common language, standards, benchmarking and performance evaluation of BI

As Teknikdalen has suggested in its research¹ currently there are distinctions between the BSR BIs to begin with definitions of business incubation and its different stages and to

¹ Business Incubators in the Baltic Sea Region – ways to increase quality and effectiveness, Teknikdalen, June 2011

proceed with what is considered good indication and standards of successful incubation. Developing a unified or “common” language presents at least two practical benefits that IBI Net can bring directly to its members, as well as to the planning and financing bodies responsible for BIs in each of the BSR countries.

Firstly, as the “common” language and set of indicators for evaluation of BI performance is developed it offers a possibility to provide benchmarking services to the IBI Net members and a wider BSR BI community, providing each of the BIs a chance to assess its position and performance relative to the other BSR BIs. Such information, would not only give each BI an understanding of its own areas for improvement, but provide a valuable hard data also for BI when they discuss their funding and support needs with the local and national governments.

Secondly, a problem that is observed currently in Latvia, but probably existing also in the other Eastern European countries is that policy makers and public funders of BIs lack sufficient expertise to design efficient BI support programs with relevant performance indicators. For example, presently in Latvia incubators supported by the state aid program from the Latvian Investment and Development Agency do not finance any mentoring activities and are heavily judged by amount of jobs created and taxes paid by the incubation companies throughout the incubation period, as well as by survival rate of the companies. Small deviations from the targets set by the government lead to financial penalties against the BI managing companies. As a result motivation of the BI managers is somewhat skewed in a way that they tend to choose less risky projects. There are even some rumors that it leads to a situation where the businesses run at BIs are asked to set up “parallel” companies in the same BI just to ensure that enough companies survive, employ and pay taxes in the relevant BI. This clearly signals for a need of external expertise and consultation to local policy makers in designing better BI support programs for the upcoming years.

1.3.1.4. Information on BIs and incubation companies in the BSR

Currently in Internet and other sources there is a lack of systemized information and databases about BIs in the BSR. There is some information about the Nordic BIs; however, using the most common approach of googling for BIs in the BSR apart from the IBI Net project portal and related publications there are a few relevant sources.

This clearly gives an indication of untapped information niche that is expected to be filled by the IBI Net portal to be launched. Relevant and structured information both about BIs and their companies including detailed profiles is another practical benefit that IBI Net can offer not only to its members and member companies, but also other BIs in the BSR, as well as interested parties such as investors or businesses searching for partners.

For proposals on the needed improvements to the portal and possibility to develop more value added services see subsection “1.5.Tools for cooperation”.

1.3.1.5. Internationalization services for incubation companies

Through networking among BI managers one should not forget that BIs are set-up for benefit of its incubation companies and promotion of entrepreneurship. While networking and knowledge transfer among BI staff will increase competence and expertise of BI managers and enrich them with new ideas, eventually benefiting also the incubation companies, also direct benefits and down-to-earth services shall not be forgotten. Many of the companies in BIs are in need for international partnerships and search of export markets. However, they lack either contacts network and financial resources or

understanding of local business cultures to enter international markets on their own. This is where IBI Net both in a centralized manner through the Association as soft-landing program development coordinator and brokerage event organizer and in decentralized manner through each of the partners as hosts and implementers of soft landing and partner search services in their respective countries can offer tangible benefits to the BI companies. Moreover, this is one area where not only Eastern partners can benefit from Western ones, but also vice versa as Scandinavian and German companies often lack understanding of local business cultures, mentalities and legal environments of the Eastern European countries, particularly so beyond the borders of the EU.

1.3.1.6. Funding & investor attraction for companies

Attraction of funding for incubation companies is a hot issue for most of the BSR BIs. There are at least two ways how IBI Net can help. Firstly, by establishing contacts and information exchange with business angels and investors locally and sharing information also about investment opportunities in companies of IBI Net partner BIs, i.e., bridging local investors with investment prospects in partner countries of IBI Net, as well as cooperating with international business investor organizations, such as European Business Angels Network, to bring external investors to IBI Net BIs. Secondly, IBI Net could undertake an initiative and organize a BSR event, e.g. forum, start-up “sauna” or mini boot-camp, for investors to meet with the best companies from each of the IBI Net BIs. More on this last proposal see subsection “1.5.Tools for cooperation”.

1.3.1.7. Marketing and lobbying of BI importance and support funding attraction at the BSR and EU level

As already described under benchmarking area IBI Net clearly has a potential to suggest policy improvements and showcase hard data on BI performance to national policy makers and funders of BIs. By its own successful example IBI Net has already and shall in future be a visible example of an accomplished interregional cooperation for SMEs and entrepreneurship support. IBI Net is particularly well positioned for that – it focuses on the BSR, which is one of the two macro regions with developed strategy – EU Strategy for the BSR (EUSBSR) – a document that is strongly backed by the European Parliament and that will be a reference point for future allocation of funding in ETC programs for period 2014-2020. The Consultant strongly recommends that IBI Net attempts to receive a Flagship project status under EUSBSR. More of this is discussed under subsection “4.2.3.Lobbying activities for attraction of further EU funding”.

1.3.1.8. Development of new cross-border cooperation projects

Obviously IBI Net is a good platform to develop future cross border cooperation projects funded from the EU funds and/or other sources be it through the Association or between some of the members and third parties. More of this is discussed under subsection “4.2.External funding sources”.

1.4. FORMAT FOR COOPERATION

There are two main further cooperation formats for the future IBI Net activities:

- formal cooperation through the Association;
- informal/virtual networking via grassroots initiatives involving several (not necessarily all) members of the Association, as well as third parties outside IBI Net.

Both types of cooperation formats shall be used by IBI Net – cooperation through the Association to coordinate wider initiatives concerning most IBI Net partners and future developments, as well as cooperation between specific members to tackle needs of particular members, e.g. learning needs, contact exchange or internationalization in particular markets. More of this is discussed in the next subsection “1.5.Tools for cooperation”.

1.5. TOOLS FOR COOPERATION

1.5.1. THE ASSOCIATION

1.5.1.1. Its role and responsibilities

During the interviews conducted by the Consultant all but one of the project partners and SC members said they find the Association necessary for continuation and sustainability of the IBI Net cooperation activities after completion of the present project.

The key role of the Association and its elected Executive Board that among others comprises the most experienced project partners from BIs in Sweden and Germany shall be to act as a leader and coordinator of the future IBI Net development initiatives. By this it should be ensured that after completion of the project IBI Net does not enter a stand-by mode in which the present IBI Net partners use established contacts only in a reactionary manner, i.e. only when some particular need or unclear question arises.

Of course the Association has already defined formal roles in its Statutes, but in essence the Consultant wishes to highlight the following key responsibilities for the Association over the next couple of years:

- general leadership and coordination of those IBI Net cooperation activities and development initiatives that concern all/most IBI Net partners and/or cover at least five BSR countries;
- definition and provision of the Association’s services;
- marketing and attraction of new members;
- lobbying.

1.5.1.2. Key services

In the “take-off” years the Consultant recommends the Association to have a focus on the following:

- organization of knowledge exchange activities for BI staff on specific BI issues (e.g. coaching, incubation company evaluation);
- development of a “common language” and benchmarking of BIs in the BSR;
- management and further development of the IBI Net portal and ICT tool;
- organization of contact exchange, brokerage and mini-boot camp events for incubation companies in the BSR;
- coordination of soft-landing package and development of short-term Shared-desk services—at each of members BI to be used on short-term bases by incubation companies visiting from other members countries;

- lobbying of IBI Net at the institutions planning the BSR future and respective EU funds to ensure further attraction of public funding for the IBI Net activities;
- development of new international level cooperation project ideas in the BSR region.

1.5.1.3. Key steps to be taken

At its current stage the Association is a newborn, which needs to grow in strength and size. Founding members have committed between EUR 200 and 250 each, which on the one hand is a small amount of money and does not allow the Association to fund any significant developments; whilst on the other hand, even for this small amount of money the existing members will wish to see some realistic returns. Hence, it is the utmost importance for the Association to establish credibility in the eyes of the existing members, as well as to attract new members. The best way to do that is through tangible benefits for the partners. The Consultant proposes the following down-to-earth, but productive further steps to be taken by the Association within the first year after completion of the current project:

1. Completion of the registration process of the Association.
2. Attraction of at least 1-2 members from the remaining BSR countries – DK, EST, LT, FIN, RUS.
3. Organization of at least one knowledge transfer event for BI managers.
4. Organization of at least one brokerage or mini-bootcamp event for companies.
5. Establishment of soft landing short-term Shared-desk in member BI for companies.
6. Completion of the recommended current content upgrades for the portal.
7. Development of benchmarking methodology and performance of initial benchmarking comparison at least among the IBI Net BIs.

After taking these steps the Association will be able to demonstrate actual deliverables and benefits to acquire further funding and personnel time support from its existing members, as well as this will help in exhibiting the value of joining “the club” for new members.

Examples of what the services of the Association could look in practice (including the aforementioned key steps to be taken) are further provided under description of each of the cooperation tools in subsections 1.5.2.-1.5.6. However, it should be noted that cooperation tools described in those sections are not meant to be limited only for purposes of the Association or its members, also non-members from IBI Net network or cooperation with other the BSR BIs is encouraged where appropriate for the benefit and popularization of IBI Net.

1.5.2. IBI NET PORTAL

1.5.2.1. Current contents

As intended the IBI Net portal targets an important niche of providing segmented and structured information on BIs and incubation companies in the BSR. Fields and search options that are programmed according to the Technical specification are relevant and practical; however, the Consultant has identified two problem areas that need to be addressed, if the portal is to be used as a promotional and motivational tool to inform

about IBI Net and attract new members, and even more so, if this information is to be offered on a fee-basis in the future:

- Missing actual contents and unified format of information in the portal

This regards the “Description” field of companies and also incubators. For, example, for all of the German companies there is only basic contact data, but no information for “Description” provided, for the Polish and Swedish companies there is a very short one-line description, for some of the Norwegian gaming companies the description is more about the life philosophy and values of the founders rather than actual services or technical specifications they can offer, for the Latvian and Belarusian companies it varies - some have extensive description, some none. Somewhat similar situation is with the description of incubators. The Consultant recommends that a unified approach is taken and at least 5-10 lines of description for all companies and incubators is provided before the portal is marketed to the third parties.

- Number of companies and incubators in the portal

Currently there are only eight incubators and around 150 companies in the portal’s data base. This information amount is too small to be interesting for external users especially so if they would have to pay for that. Even though the number of IBI Net members will not grow so fast, the Consultant recommends that the IBI Net partners approach other incubators in their as well as the other BSR countries proposing to submit the relevant information into the IBI Net portal to enlarge the data base at least to 30-60 incubators and 500-1000 companies.

1.5.2.2. Future content developments

The Consultant recommends considering three directions for the further development of the portal’s content that could increase its value and attractiveness for the existing partners, as well as new users:

- IBI-cloud - methodological data base

During the interviews a need for good methodological guidelines and relevant documents on the best-practice models for successful incubation was identified. This information could be collected from two sources – internally from the more experienced IBI Net partners and also externally from the sources like EBN, InfoDev, European Commission, World Bank, NBIA and others that possess relevant information. Compiling such information in a designated place and adding certain value by sorting information by relevance and topics could be a helpful tool to make the portal more attractive for various stakeholders interested in incubation and increasing the overall popularity of the portal.

- IBI Wiki - IT Q&A tool

Already suggested by Teknikdalen in its June 2011 research and also once more confirmed as necessary by the partners during the interviews, it is recommended that the portal is complemented by a section where registered users can carry out Q&A type discussions about the BI issues and where discussions are saved and accumulated so that later they can be used as knowledge reference sources. This would be some form of internal Wikipedia for BI issues. The best approach for this would be if some of the partners could volunteer to administer such a section and develop it in a structured manner.

- Information on funding sources for BIs and BI companies

Be it BIs themselves or incubation companies a question “where to get money from?” is always of an utmost interest. For the use of BIs these could be links and brief comments regarding public funding sources for incubators (e.g. from ETC and/or other EU funded programs 2014-2020), whereas for the BI companies it could be information about business angels, venture and seed funds interested in the BSR, as well as allowing the interested investors and/or companies to post their investment supply and demand requests. In this respect there are two things regarding the Riga Planning Region (RPR) worth noting: (1) RPR plans developing an IT investor platform for interested investors in the region, which could be linked with the relevant section of the IBI Net portal and (2) according to the statistics the most visited part of the RPR website is a section about the EU funds and public funding available. By analogy a well-structured information about the funding sources could help to popularize the portal and IBI Net overall.

1.5.2.3. Management of the portal

Answers of the IBI Net partners during the interviews indicated that most expect the Association to take the responsibility of the portal; however, the Executive Board of the Association has not yet arrived at a consensus on how it should be organized. The Consultant recommends that the Association becomes the responsible body for the portal as it will ensure coordination of its existing contents and future development in line with the overall IBI Net interests and initiatives. As to the technical maintenance, it could be outsourced either to the Riga Technical University (RTU) or a third party service provider. What concerns the financial resources needed for maintenance and development of the portal, RTU has expressed a preliminary readiness to provide hosting and maintenance of the portal as it is right now; however, further developments and periodic updates would have to be financed either by in-kind contribution from the interested partners (personnel time in updates and upgrades) or separate allocations by the partners for particular developments, since the current membership fees of the Association cannot cover that.

1.5.3. ICT TOOL

ICT tool for monitoring and evaluation of companies' performance throughout the incubation process has been developed and is being presently finalized by the German partner. Overall the tool seems to be built according to the intended needs and promises to be a structured and helpful assistance for the BI staff and mentors. At the same time the tool seems to have a rather monitoring and follow-up focus. As a result during the interviews the Latvian BIs expressed concerns that for their currently understaffed (2-3 people) operational model, in which there are no mentors (due to financial constraints) that could help the BI staff, the tool will be hardly applicable as it requires regular data input about each of the companies in the system and the existing staff of the Latvian BIs is already overloaded to spare time for that. As an alternative the Riga Region Business Development Incubator indicated that in their current situation an ICT tool that would help the BI staff in a semi-automated way to evaluate and screen business plans and companies actual performance based on certain hard data (key financial ratios and their dynamics, export data and market shares, intellectual property right indicators, personnel competence and experience in particular fields, etc.) to decide if the start-up should be accepted in the incubator and latter see how long the incubation support shall be provided.

At this stage it is not immediately clear, if the above described situation and demand is only of importance for the Latvian incubators or also for a wider range of BIs in the other BSR countries (during interviews only the Latvians raised these concerns). Therefore the Consultant encourages the IBI Net partners to explore this need further and if such

persists then consider of either fine tuning the existing ICT tool or introducing new developments, as practical applicability for users needs is a final goal of every tool.

Regarding management and future development of the ICT tool – similar to the situation with the portal the Consultant recommends that the Association takes responsibility of the tool, whereas future developments should be collectively sponsored by partners.

1.5.4. JOINT MEETINGS, WORKSHOPS, SEMINARS AND STUDY VISITS FOR THE BI MANAGERS

The primary tool for knowledge and best practice exchange is through direct personal communication and experience, which is why the already accomplished exchange visits and workshops are so highly regarded by the current IBI Net partners. Clearly, regular workshops and seminars on specific subjects shall be carried out in the future. The Consultant recommends that within the first year after completion of the current project at least 1 or 2 workshops/seminars about coaching are organized within IBI Net, inviting not only the existing IBI Net members to participate, but also staff from the other BSR incubators as that would be a good way to increase awareness about IBI Net and show its practical value.

It is also recommended to think of developing a dedicated and longer (at least 1-2 weeks) coaching and mentoring knowledge exchange tours either through interested partners visiting incubators with extensive mentoring and coaching experience or working in the other direction – by inviting experienced mentors or coaches, for example, from Scandinavia to come to the Eastern European incubators for a period of 1-2 weeks or even longer and work with the BI staff and also some selected number of companies to facilitate the spillover of mentoring practices. Obviously an additional funding is needed for such activities. In case an interesting and adequate coaching-training package is developed, individual incubators might be ready to pay for it. Another source to cover expenses of such events would certainly be attraction of further public funding from national or EU funds, e.g., the BSR Programme extension stage.

1.5.5. EVENTS AND SERVICES FOR COMPANIES

There are a number of activities that the IBI Net partners can do to directly benefit the BI companies.

- Contact brokerages and exchanges around the BSR

The potential of IBI Net network lies not only in the fact that it can connect BI managers, regional and planning authorities around the BSR, but also bring together the incubates to facilitate partner, client or supplier search in the BSR. The idea already has been proposed that each BI brings one or a more companies to the final conference of the IBI Net project to initiate networking on the company level via IBI Net.

The Consultant proposes to go further by trying to organize an annual 2-4 day brokerage event for selected number of companies (e.g. 5 companies per incubator) from each of the partner BI. The event could be organized on a rolling basis, e.g. each year in another member country. The program of the event could include introduction to the local market and business specifics, networking between the companies, workshops on certain topics (e.g. creativity, sales & marketing, investor pitching, etc). If planned well in advance, travel and accommodation costs per person for such event are estimated at EUR 400-500. Part of these costs could be covered by participants themselves, the other part from BI or

additional project funding. In addition local venue and catering costs would need to be covered.

- Mini accelerator / boot camp and meetings with investors

Another tool worth considering is organizing a mini boot-camp for the IBI Net BI companies similar to what is done by <http://garage48.org> (2 days over a weekend), <http://startupsauna.com/> (6 weeks) or <http://www.startupbootcamp.org/> (12 weeks) events that select between 10-15 tech or creative sector teams of 2 people with early start-up ideas and provide intensive coaching from serial entrepreneurs over the course of the event to quickly turn ideas into working services in prototypes and pitch them for actual and interested investors at the end of the event.

Event could be organized by selecting 1-2 best ideas from each of the partner incubators and also inviting some the other BSR incubators of particular interest for IBI Net to send their companies for participation. Event length could be from 2-10 days depending on the chosen focus and budget. Not to reinvent the wheel it might be reasonable to consider teaming up with some of the existing boot-camp organizers to assist with the help of such event organization. For example, Garage48 is a non-profit foundation setup by Estonian entrepreneurs and open for launching of new events.

There would be a number of benefits from carrying out such an event. Both the companies and also the BI managers would gain practical knowledge of coaching through direct experience during the event. Coaches in such events usually are serial and successful entrepreneurs who either are potential investors themselves or are well connected to venture capitalists and other funding sources. As a result valuable networks with financiers and coaches would be strengthened. Finally, boot-camps and accelerators are “hot” topics on today’s entrepreneurship development arena. By producing such an event IBI Net would also raise its image and popularity.

Depending on how interesting are businesses and business ideas in IBI Net’s incubators for potential investors, financing for such events could be either attracted through private sponsorships or from public funds, e.g. the BSR Programme extension stage.

- Strategic matchmaking for finding investors

Another type of the event that could be organized as a one day separate event on its own or as closing day of either contact brokerage or mini-boot camp events is a strategic matchmaking event that brings together selected number of business ideas/start-up companies and investors and large corporations that are interested in acquiring new technologies. Typically companies are provided with up to 10 min presentation slots for pitching and later either dedicated one-to-one meetings or informal networking during the informal part of the event is offered. Good example of such event is MoneyTalks® organized by Technopolis from Finland <http://www.technopolisonline.com/index/107?eventId=169> . If IBI Net can host a compact, but quality event bringing together all the BSR countries that could boost its visibility and network.

- Soft landing and local short-term Shared-desk services

Under the guidance of the Association each of the IBI Net partners could develop a soft-landing service offer for companies wishing to come and get access to the particular national markets. Good example of this is done by SMEDGE project <http://www.smedge.org/news/smedge-project-partners-have-launched-soft-landing-packages> , where one of the partners is the Latvian Technological Center (Mr. Janis Stabulnieks). Typical soft-landing package consists of offer for equipped office and meeting

rooms, consultations and introduction into the local legislation, business culture and market specifics, networking services and some more specific consultations, legal and postal address, as well as may involve accommodation and local transport support. Length of the package varies between 1 day to 1 month and price range from EUR 30-2000 (typically within range of EUR 10-70 per day depending on accommodation support). Knowing that two leading Estonian BIs have developed soft-landing packages within SMEDGE project, it might be good to invite them to join IBI Net both ensuring the network to Estonia as well as gaining extra knowledge on soft landing issues.

While development of fee based soft landing services might take time and be tricky depending on local specifics in each of the BIs, one thing that the Consultant strongly recommends establishing as soon as possible is a joint agreement between the IBI Net members that upon a prior booking a free-of-charge Shared-desk in a form of 1 or 2 short-term working places for a duration of up to 3-5 days and a minimal support from the local BI staff regarding contact network and explanation of business cultures can be ensured for the partner BI companies wishing to come to explore markets in particular countries. That would ensure an effective and inexpensive way how the IBI Net network could be beneficial to companies in a decentralized manner even before particular events are organized. This could be something similar that EU ensures for its entrepreneurs wishing to explore China <http://www.eusmecentre.org.cn/content/hot-desking-service> .

1.5.6. EXPERT EVALUATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BENCHMARKING & POLICY PLANNING

Provision of quality BI benchmarking services to the IBI Net members and potentially to the other BIs in the BSR is something the Association can realistically do, especially so as it manages to grow in size. To do that a methodological model for benchmarking needs to be developed across such categories as: organizational, legal and funding model of BI, personnel and incubation services offered, access to funding and investors for companies, and, of course, also comparison across key performance indicators (e.g., business plans, start-ups, jobs created, companies assisted, investor funding raised), as well as expenditures incurred to provide the services. Good example of how to do that is a model of EBN <http://www.ebn.be/assets/assets/pdf/quality/2011/benchmarkingreportsample2.pdf> providing both national and international level benchmarking based on data collected from 200+ its member Business and Innovation Centers (incubators). EBN has also developed a pricing model, in which EBN members receive benchmarking for free, whereas non-members pay EUR 950 that can be deducted from eventual membership fee.

Experts of IBI Net involved in the benchmarking could also provide the expertise to municipal and national policymakers on how to develop future incubation support programs, which is a niche that IBI Net with its collective BSR knowledge and benchmarking data could fill and potentially monetize through expert services via open or semi-closed framework type public tenders.

2. COMPETENCE AND CAPACITY BUILDING

To cover areas and measures for strengthening managerial capacity of the IBI Net members.

The below table provides a summary of the key learning needs of each of the IBI Net partners.

	LV			BY	PL	DE	NO	SE	RUS
	Creative Andrejsala	RRBDI	RPR	BNTU Polytechnic	CC Ellblag	TZV	ICH	Teknikdalen	LRBSC
Learning needs									
Coaching and mentoring	X	X		X	X		X		
Overall organizational model of incubation ecosystem & clustering			X				X		X
Financing and financial management of incubators			X				X		
New services and process steps in BI at operational level						X	X		X
Finance and investor attraction for companies								X	
ICT tools and evaluation of business throughout the incubation cycle	X	X				X			X
Soft-landing services, local contacts and business cultures	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Quality management						X			
Innovation management, business creativity			X				X		

The most common learning need among the IBI Net partners is coaching and mentoring system for BI, all except two BI (Teknikdalen and TZV) during the interviews marked this as the foremost area of further exploration and learning. Overall organizational model of business incubation at regional and national scale is of interest for the Riga Planning Region as for a planning and regional development support organization. Also Innovation Center Hedmark indicated that they would wish to learn more on how to foster business cluster development for the benefit of entrepreneurial ecosystem. The same two partners have also expressed interest to learn more on financing model and good practices for financial management of business incubation. The German partners from TZV and the Norwegians have indicated that they would be interested to study new approaches and services on how various stages throughout incubation life-cycle are supported in the partners' BIs.

Teknikdalen has a good knowledge of financing and investor sources for incubation companies in Sweden, but would be interested to gain more experience how funding is organized in other countries that are global leaders in venture capital and investor issues.

Tools including the ICT ones that could help to evaluate potential incubates and accepted companies during incubation process for the eligibility of further incubation support based on key metrics of their business plans and performance reports is of particular interest for BIs in Latvia. The German partners have also indicated it as a field of further exploration and development, probably because this is where they have already some expertise to build on further and this topic is related to the ICT tool for company progress monitoring they develop in the project.

Soft landing is an issue of interest for all the partners to gain better knowledge of business cultures, networks and entry support in each of the BSR countries for the incubation companies. Quality management for improvement of its services is of particular interest for TZV. The Riga Planning Region and the Norwegian partners have also indicated a need to learn more of innovation management and facilitation, as well as of ways how to stimulate business creativity and birth of new business ideas by putting together unrelated businesses or entrepreneurs from different sectors. The Russian associated partner from the state institution Leningrad Region Business Support Centre is interested in establishing a general flow and network of information with more experienced incubators in the BRS: to acquire knowledge on the latest trends and best practice models in incubation models in general and to find out what new services BI can offer, including application of the modern ICT tools in the incubation process. Russians are also interested in internationalization, exploration of local business cultures to support exploration of new markets for the companies.

2.2. LEARNING SUPPLY

The table below summarizes interview answers from the project partners of what in their opinion can partners to learn from in each of the learning areas. During the interviews each of the partners was also asked what they themselves think of being able to “teach” others. These answers at large coincided with what others thought about competencies of a particular partner. Hence, the table shows both points of views.

	LV			BY	PL	DE	NO	SE	RUS	Externally
	Creative Andrejsala	RRBDI	RPR	BNTU Polytechnic	CC Elblag	TZV	ICH	Teknikdalen	LRBSC	
Partners to learn from (as indicated by others)										
Coaching and mentoring								X		
Overall organizational model of incubation ecosystem & clustering								X		X USA
Financing and financial management of incubators						X				
New services and process steps in BI at operational level	X				X		X	X		X Poland
Finance and investor attraction for companies				X				X		X USA, Israel

	LV			BY	PL	DE	NO	SE	RUS	Externally
	Creative Andrejsala	RRBDI	RPR	BNTU Polytechnic	CC Elblag	TZV	ICH	Teknikdalen	LRBSC	
ICT tools and evaluation of business throughout the incubation cycle										X Finland
Soft-landing services, local contacts and business cultures	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Quality management								X		
Innovation management, business creativity										X UK, USA,C A

The most experienced partner of IBI Net is Teknikdalen having a very well-functioning Triple Helix model – cooperation between universities, industry and government – for purpose of regional development, innovation and entrepreneurship support. As a result the partners feel and Teknikdalen agrees that they and the Swedish model in general can be a source of competence for such specific topics as implementation of coaching and mentoring systems in BI and ways how to organize process steps of incubation – pre-incubation, incubation and acceleration, how cooperation between venture / seed capitalists and BI is done, as well as for learning the general model on how to organize regional cooperation and business cluster development in the Triple Helix manner. The German partner has indicated Teknikdalen as a source of quality management expertise, whereas the Latvian and Polish incubators see it as an example for introducing new ways of offering support services in BI.

A specific of the Latvian incubation model is that the third party service provider costs are covered for the incubation companies, e.g., companies can choose external consultants of their own choice, attract web developers, IT programmers, choose travel agencies for going to exhibitions and these costs are co-financed up to 85% by BI. Reckonable aspect of this is that companies can freely “vote”/choose with their money which experts and services they find most relevant for their needs. This is something not so common in other BSR incubators. The German partner has been indicated by the others as an example of the BI financial management competence. The Creative incubator Andrejsala mentioned the Belorussian incubators as an example, where investors take a certain equity stake in the companies from the start and which might be interesting as an outside-of-EU showcase. The Innovation Center Hedmark is a source of competence for incubation of bio-tech and ICT companies. The Russian partners can be a source of local expertise and contacts for establishing business landing schemes in Russia.

For certain areas partners indicated that external competence is needed. Teknikdalen would be interested to obtain more experience in financing for seed and venture capital model from Silicon Valley or Israel, which could be of interest also for the other partners. As to the cluster development and innovation management the Norwegians thought it might be valuable to attract competence from the top level academia, e.g. top US universities or Oxford University in the field of Open Innovation.

RPR has also referred to professional associations such as NBIA experts or academia from North America to study creative thinking approaches for development of SMEs. As to the ICT tool that would fit the needs of Latvian incubators for evaluation (not monitoring) of business plans and incubates performance the Finland's expertise and in particular the one of a non-profit company Prizztech from Pori in Finland that provides expertise in innovations and promotion of entrepreneurship was mentioned.

2.3. TOOLS FOR COMPETENCE AND CAPACITY BUILDING

The most efficient way to strengthen the managerial capacity and build competences in the learning areas that can be covered by competencies of the existing IBI Net partners is to continue in person learning meetings through 1-3 day workshops, seminars and on-site study visits at the partners' locations. It is a good idea to do them on rotating bases at different partners.

As discussed under subsection 1.5.4, what regards specifically to coaching, several partners have expressed an interest in organizing either mini internships of their BI staff in Sweden or bringing the Swedish experts to their BI for a length of at least 1-2 weeks to learn coaching as it is applied in practice by observing how concrete companies are coached. Most probably such sessions could be organized for several times over the course of the year. Obviously a thing that will need to be addressed is remuneration of the Teknikdalen experts, as they do have their daily duties back home. It would have to be covered either from own BI sources or additional project, e.g. the BSR Programme extension stage funding.

For attraction of external competence there are three ways to do that. The first one is through internalization of competence via attraction of new members to IBI Net. The area that can definitely be strengthened is a soft-landing competence, e.g. attraction of new members from currently unrepresented BSR countries would ensure contacts and access to markets of those countries. More specifically, Estonian incubators already have competence of developing and pricing soft-landing programs. Speaking of Finland, and particularly of BI related to Alto University, they are the ones hosting start-up sauna events and can be a good expertise for organization of a mini-boot camp event.

The second, more conventional way to gaining access of external expertise is bringing in dedicated experts on specific issues such as innovation management or creativity for workshops and seminars organized by IBI Net or as consultants or developers for the ICT tool improvements. This of course will require financial expenditure which again could be possibly financed from, e.g. the BSR Programme extension stage funding.

The third, somewhat a middle way of the first two, is for IBI Net to network with other business support organizations. Formal integration in larger structures such as EBN, IASP is for a fee and at the moment was deemed inappropriate for the Association. However, through membership or by the IBI Net individual partners attending events such as NBIA or IASP or study visits to Silicon Valley in USA or to a UK Silicon Fen in Cambridge, such knowledge can later be disseminated afterwards within the IBI Net internal events.

3. PROMOTION

Including marketing and PR tools and measures promoting IBI Net.

3.1. AWARENESS BUILDING AIMED AT EXTENSION OF THE IBI NET

3.1.1. TARGET AUDIENCE

For the purpose of expanding the number of members the primary target audience clearly is BIs or organizations owning/running BIs in the BSR.

3.1.2. MESSAGE

IBI Net should be able to show that it is able to offer tangible solutions and practical benefits for the needs of BI and that there is a value added from being in a network and/or the Association rather than addressing those needs individually.

The key branding message should be focused around its unique value proposal and could be texted as follows: *“Focused and reasonably personalized (not anonymous) network of the Baltic Sea Region business incubators to provide professional solutions and developments and lobby support for business incubation issues”.*

The key needs that IBI Net targets to cover can be explained as:

- knowledge transfer & competence development for BI staff;
- internationalization support & investor attraction to companies;
- lobbying and development of new cross-border cooperation projects unattainable at individual level.

3.1.3. CHANNELS AND TOOLS FOR COMMUNICATION

IBI Net is in a game of specialized B2B communication for BIs and its direct stakeholders, where direct communication and personal contact and network is of critical importance for attraction of new members. The Consultant recommends focusing on the following primary communication channels and activities:

- Events organized by IBI Net

Starting with the project’s BI Forum and Final conference in May 2012 and as discussed under subsection “1.5 Tools for cooperation” within the first following year it would be crucial for IBI Net to make one successful knowledge transfer and/or one brokerage, “mini-boot camp” or MoneyTalks® type event for the companies and investors. Information about these events would have to be provided to potential member BIs in advance through a direct email or phone communication and it is advised that between 10-30% participants are non-member BIs. If events are successful this will be great credibility boost and provide strong word of mouth advertising among the BSR incubators.

- Events organized by others

Events where more business incubators can be met of course are the ETC project presentation events like one organized by TZV in Berlin in January 2012², annual events of national business incubator associations or state institutions responsible for innovation support in the BSR countries or international organization events of IASP, EBN, and NBIA, which individual IBI Net members attend. A formal presentation of the IBI Net project or an informal spread of word of mouth is another tool recommended for attracting new members and raising the overall awareness.

- Personal invitations / recommendations

As IBI Net has a goal of not only covering the remaining BSR countries, but also inviting more members from the existing member countries then an accomplishable task would be to agree that each of the existing BIs invites or “sells” IBI Net to at least one another BI from its country probably with somewhat different industry, regional or competence specifics to promote diversity among members.

- New cross-border cooperation projects

If there was no ERDF “subsidy” for the current project IBI Net most likely would not have been born. Obviously, a very effective way would be to create new cross-border cooperation projects involving at least 30% IBI Net non-members. That would allow newcomers seeing the value of IBI Net through direct networking experience at subsidized cost. These ideas, however, might need to be postponed until 2014 when new ETC programs will open.

- Internet and social media

If the proposed improvements to the IBI Net portal content are introduced, it will be a good “business card” for IBI Net able to fill the currently quite an empty niche on the web about business incubation in the BSR. As the Google search algorithm uses relevant tags within the source website, as well as a number of reference links from other websites, then Consultants suggests working with both of these areas: (1) the RTU portal developer should configure the website with relevant tags to be high ranked on Google search; (2) a simple, effective and costless task would be to approach the key and most popular national and international websites in the field of business incubation and entrepreneurship support with the request to include links to the IBI Net portal in their websites. The websites that have dedicated “Links” sections and could be approached with request to include links to IBI Net portal are:

- <http://www.infodev.org/en/TopicResources.8.html> - the site has dedicated regional business incubator network links, where from Europe is only Eastern Europe as a region with only one incubator ECABIT indicated, but no references to Northern Europe and the BSR. So it’s a good chance for IBI Net.
- <http://www.ebn.be/DisplayPage.aspx?pid=11>
- <http://www.sooipp.org.pl/linki.html>

² <http://www.technologiezentrum.de/deutsch/projekte/laufende-projekte/josefin/josefin-news/>

- http://www.eurada.org/site/index.php?option=com_weblinks&view=categories&Itemid=83&lang=en
- <http://www.insme.org/links/online-resources>
- <http://www.eban.org/resource-center/links/2-useful-links-in-europe>
- national websites that each of IBI Net members can suggest as relevant for sources for incubation and innovation issues.

As to the social media, to keep up-to-date with modern developments the Consultant recommends to consider establishing a Twitter account and FaceBook “company page” for IBI Net and arrange automatic news feeds from the IBI Net portal News & Events to avoid overloading the already busy project partners. What could be done though at least in FaceBook to popularize IBI Net is to try to find pages of BSR BI of interest and sign-up as their fans (click LIKE button) and immediately also either send an email within FaceBook or make a post on the wall introducing IBI Net and encouraging a reciprocal LIKE relationship; thus, growing FaceBook LIKE’s among the target audience.

3.2. COMMUNICATION WITH OTHER BUSINESS SUPPORT NETWORKS

3.2.1. TARGET AUDIENCE

Key networks to approach are national business incubator associations, innovation support, and risk capital and business angel networks in each of the BSR countries. Similar institutions on an international level first of all at the EU level and then also globally.

3.2.2. MESSAGE

Overall they should be informed of establishment of IBI Net as a platform for access to and cross-border cooperation tool of BIs and start-up companies in the BSR. In future information on any significant events and new development shall be transmitted to these institutions.

3.2.3. CHANNELS AND TOOLS FOR COMMUNICATION

During the interviews the IBI Net members and leaders of the Association reasonably declined necessity to formally join any international networks (e.g. EBN or IASP), which requires financial contributions, before the Association has firmly developed itself. Nevertheless, the informal and friendly networking relationships with them are welcomed. One channel to achieve it is the already mentioned participation of the individual IBI Net members in the events of these organizations. The other recommended channel would be through electronic communication in form of a brief introductory letter including the link to the IBI Net portal. Future communications would be recommended not in form of periodic newsletters that could be perceived as SPAM, but in form of rather personalized (addressed to particular addressee) emails about the most significant events or updates of IBI Net.

Regarding the national level organizations either similar approach or personalized phone call plus email type communication depending on familiarity level is recommended.

3.3. ACTIONS FOR POLITICAL SUPPORT

3.3.1. LOCAL REGIONAL LEVEL

Target audience on the local level is key owners/funders of BIs. In most cases those will be local municipalities or universities. As these are people who have a significant say in BI budgets also in the parts available for future activities of IBI Net, then they will wish in essence to see “what is in it for their regions and communities?”. The best way to handle this is to show some actual results, which can be done by each partner BI at least through personal contact meetings and presentations in their offices explaining competences and networks gained through IBI Net, but even better is to invite BI owners/funders to participate in either of the IBI Net events be it a Final Conference in May 2012 or later on knowledge transfer or brokerage events. However, even more convincing results could be achieved if internationalization services and short-term Shared-desk for incubates are established and some of the local companies find actual partners, clients or investors through IBI Net. Another impressive achievement is, of course, an ability of BI to attract additional external public funding. Money that is in addition to municipal or universities budgets is always welcomed.

As a background support at least one explanatory and descriptive publication in regional media per year would be helpful to create a positive image of the network. It is advisable that the publication follows shortly after key milestone events (conference, workshops, or brokerage) organized by IBI Net and that some particular achievements are described. Depending on the size of the country (e.g. the Baltic States) publications might need to be done in national, not regional media.

3.3.2. NATIONAL LEVEL

National or federal level marketing should be targeted at policy makers and funding agencies that might not directly support individual BIs, but decide on principal funding allocation and innovation support design programs or provide funds for cross border cooperation and knowledge spillover programs. Here two approaches are recommended.

One is joint political support memorandum, ideas for which are suggested in section “6.1.Political support”. It should be submitted to national or federal governments in a form of an official letter. The second effective tool would be a compilation either of the first benchmarking report showing each BI performance within IBI Net relative to members in the other BSR countries or at least aggregate statistics across IBI Net on how many companies and employed persons the network covers including key financial metrics and highlights of best start-ups or established success stories from each BI. Most probably both types of data would be helpful. Benchmarking data would be especially helpful to partners on the Eastern side of the Baltic Sea that they can show where they stand and what are the gaps relative to BIs in the more developed BSR countries. Qualitative report would also give credibility to offer expert consultations by connecting more experienced IBI Net partners to the national policy makers to design better future policies. Aggregate statistics for IBI Net would on the other hand stress the network’s significance and wide coverage and could ensure support from national funds. It would be a good idea to present these reports not only to policy makers directly, but also in some of the national economic or innovation related conferences that are conducted annually.

3.3.3. INTERNATIONAL EU LEVEL

Activities for attaining EU level political support and awareness are discussed in subsection “4.2.3. Lobbying activities for attraction of further EU funding”.

4. FUNDING OPTIONS

4.1. INTERNAL FUNDING SOURCES

The table below summarizes readiness of each of the IBI Net members to make a financial commitment.

		Money, EUR per annum	Personnel time, days per year	Other resources (contacts, knowledge, ideas, etc.)
LV	CA	no	20-30	yes
	RRBDI	no	no	yes
	RTU	250-350 (Association + portal)	12-15	yes
	RPR	no	no	Development of new cooperation projects
BY	BNTU Polytechnic	250 for the Association if more, depends on what for	20-30	1) Support for RUS version of the portal. 2) Organization of events in BY. 3) Establishment and management of Branch office in BY (government money, personnel extra 20-30d).
PL	CC Elblag	n/a, depends on the CC chairman, who need to see actual results first	see above	yes
DE	TZV	1000	20	yes
NO	ICH	250 (Association) more cannot say yet	probably yes, cannot say exactly	yes
	Hedmark CC	n/a, need to see actual results first	see above	see above
SE	Teknikdalen	500-1000	10-20	1)Time, competence, contacts. 2)Hosting of events for partners and companies in Sweden.
RUS	LRBSC	Money for RUS personnel time and travel	Up to 30	yes

Although the general consensus of the partners is that IBI Net is a valuable network and everybody would be willing to contribute at least with knowledge, contacts and other intangibles, when question comes to indicating particular money and time commitments.

The most definite were the partners represented on the Executive Board of the Association – Teknikdalen, T'ZV and RTU, as well as the Belarusians who are interested in setting up a Branch office for the Association in Minsk and supporting the Russian version of the portal. RTU at the moment is not able to provide much more commitment beyond involvement in the Association leadership and portal technical maintenance. As to the Latvian BIs, they are constrained by the specifics of their financing model, where the incubator management companies have contracts with the state agency and are very restricted on what money can be spent for. Nevertheless, the Creative Andrejsala is willing to provide personnel time in similar amounts as so far.

The Polish partner – City Commune of Elblag - could not provide definite answers mostly because all decisions regarding financing and staff commitments are decided by the leaders of the municipality. At the same time there was a remark that for leaders to decide positively they need to see more concrete actions and benefits what the membership in IBI Net will bring. Somewhat similar attitude was from the Norwegian counterparts – Innovation Centre Hedmark and their owners from Hedmark City Council – in general attitude is positive, but more clarity about future actions and expected outcomes is needed before indicating any definite resource commitments beyond the Association membership.

The Riga Planning Region sees its role as a regional development promoter and project idea initiators and is ready to support IBI Net with ideas and political support. However, once IBI Net has been set-up it is a network for BIs and further direct involvement of RRP staff time or money is not envisaged, unless new externally funded projects are implemented.

The Russians as associated partners were not entitled to any financial contributions from ERDF. Nevertheless, they are interested in continuing to be a part of IBI Net. Mostly they are ready to commit with the time of their specialists for various activities of IBI Net (up to 30 days a year) and compensate their travel costs that could total to EUR 1 thousand per year. Of course, this is upon the confirmation of the state committee budget.

4.2. EXTERNAL FUNDING SOURCES

4.2.1. EU FUNDS 2007-2013: EXTENSION STAGE FOR THE BSR PROGRAMME

The current BSR Programme projects are eligible for extension stage funding of budgets up to EUR 100 000 for a project duration of up to two years. The deadline for application submission is September 16, 2012.

Since it is crucial for IBI Net and the Association to strengthen its credibility by showing more concrete benefits both for BI managers and not least also directly for the incubation companies, the Consultant recommends basing the project proposal on tools and events discussed under the section “1.5.Tools for cooperation”, namely:

- Coaching / mentoring “internships”

1-2 coaches from Sweden, for example, could come for 1-2 weeks period to incubators in Latvia, Belorussia and Poland (and maybe the other partners as well) and work intensively with selected number of best companies and meanwhile also educate local BI managers in coaching through direct demonstrations. The package could incorporate also a few days in depth workshop for BI managers in coaching issues, where all the project partners could participate and other BSR incubators could be invited to participate at their own cost. The budget is estimated at EUR 25 000 mainly for experts fees, travel and accommodation of the project partners.

- IBI Net camp - strategic matchmaking /brokerage event or mini-boot camp accelerator event for up to 15 teams from companies in IBI Net partners BI

Idea of this event is already described in subsection 1.5.5. Location of the event could be either in Sweden or Germany, where there are better connections with coaches and investors. As an illustrative example, Copenhagen Startupbootcamp event sponsors EUR 300 budget per week for every entrepreneur plus free meals in the boot camp. Office premises of 400 m² open space area is provided free of charge by Nokia in its R&D facilities (where 1000 people were laid-off and now there is excess space). Between 50-100 coaches and mentors offer their services free of charge as their main motivation is networking with other coaches and potentially find good business ideas. The only other expenditure is salary for 2-3 people - the boot camp management team. Assuming that IBI Net camp could be organized by similar arrangements³, but for a shorter period 2-10 days then a total budget for a 40 people event (15 companies with 2 people each, 10 organizers + partners) could range between EUR 15 000-30 000 depending on length and size of the event. Again other BSR incubators could be offered to participate on cost-covering bases. This could be an innovative event that none of the current BSR Programme projects have done before and would provide good marketing and differentiation for IBI Net. It would show that IBI Net is not only about conventional meetings and workshops, but follows the current topicalities in seed capital and entrepreneurship support.

- Further developments to the IBI Net portal and ICT tool

³ The BSR Programme restrictions would have to be accounted for that, for example, travel and accommodation, but not per diems can be covered for participants.

For description see subsections 1.5.2. and 1.5.3. An approximate budget of EUR 10 000-15 000 is estimated.

- Development of initial benchmarking and key statistics compilation report on the IBI Net members

Development of benchmarking methodology, performance of initial benchmarking and production of actual report including also aggregate statistics about IBI Net BIs would provide for a document for purposes of lobbying and attraction of new members as they could see some tangible example what benchmarking service results could look, if they become members of IBI Net. For more description see subsection 1.5.6. An approximate budget of EUR 10 000-15 000 is estimated.

4.2.2. 2014-2020

4.2.2.1. Strategic and programming framework

The key strategic document for the 2014-2020 period will be EUROPE 2020 strategy that sets out key goals to be achieved by the Cohesion Policy till 2020. The strategy contains eleven thematic objectives, of which No.1 and No.3 are particularly relevant for BI and innovation support – “1. Strengthening research, technological development and innovation” and “3. Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs, the agricultural sector (for the EAFRD) and the fisheries and aquaculture sector (for the EMFF)”. Thematic objectives form the basis for the Common Strategic Framework – an EU-level programming document - that will outline key actions for each thematic objective. Each thematic objective will be translated into “investment priorities” through regulations specific for each structural fund. National governments will conclude Partnership Contracts with the EC and develop Operational programs for each fund similar to what is now in the programming period 2007-2013.

EUROPE 2020 strategy also includes seven flagship initiatives that will serve as reference points for evaluating relevance of particular tasks and actions for achievement of EUROPE 2020 goals. The most notable ones for IBI Net are: Innovation Union, An industrial policy for the globalization era (including support for creation and growth of SMEs), and An Agenda for New Skills and Jobs.

At the BSR level the key strategic document is the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR), which at large is aligned with flagship initiatives and thematic objectives of the EUROPE 2020 strategy. The Member States and the EC have agreed on an Action Plan with 15 priority areas for the EUSBSR. Under each of the priority areas there are specific flagship projects, in total around 80, deemed particularly relevant for achieving the goals of the strategy.

4.2.2.2. ETC programmes

In the next programming period according to the ETC regulation proposal⁴ there will be EUR 11.7 billion allocated for the territorial cooperation programs, of it 73% for cross-border, 21% to transnational and 6% for interregional cooperation. According to the expert opinion from INTERACT office in Viborg the Baltic Sea Region with its developed

⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/governance/impact/ia_carried_out/docs/ia_2011/com_2011_0611_en.pdf

macro-regional strategy is seen as the one for which funding within the ETC programs shall be increased in comparison to the current programming period. It is expected that most ETC secretariats will stay the same as in 2007-2013 period. This means IBI Net has good perspectives for funding attractions and ETC programmes shall be viewed as the primary source for funding of IBI Nets as network activities.

4.2.2.3. COSME

In 2014-2020 the Programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (COSME) will replace the current Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP). Total COSME funding is expected at EUR 2.5 billion. There are five key action areas expected under the program of which three could be relevant, if not for IBI Net directly, then for its individual BIs or their companies: (1) support will be given to encourage trans-national networks, to exchange good practices and identify scope for expanding business activities to support SMEs or specific target groups, such as young or women entrepreneurs; (2) analytical work will be undertaken to facilitate policy-making based on facts and evidences by national and regional policymakers and a number of conferences and other public events will be held to assemble and spread sectoral knowledge and teach policy makers to support entrepreneurship; (3) internationalization support will be provided to SMEs. If IBI Net manages to become good case example of transnational BI support network and develops its benchmarking services, it has a good entry position for COSME funding.

4.2.2.4. Horizon 2020

Horizon 2020 will combine all research and innovation funding measures under its umbrella. Total budget of the program is estimated at EUR 74 billion of which about EUR 6.8 billion will be allocated via a dedicated SME support instrument to stimulate access to early stage funding and foster break through innovations. It will be similar to Small Business Innovation Research instrument provided in the U.S, where only SME will be able to apply even on a single company bases. Support will cover full innovation cycle with grants for three stages –feasibility, R&D phase and commercialization phase. This program might be relevant for IBI Net BIs, which nurture high-tech companies.

4.2.3. LOBBYING ACTIVITIES FOR ATTRACTION OF FURTHER EU FUNDING

There are two types of lobbying possibilities at the EU level: (1) targeted actions with very concrete tasks to ensure further support from funds of the ETC programmes that focus around obtaining the flagship status under the EUSBSR; (2) more general actions targeted at general awareness rising and information dissemination in the corridors of Brussels about IBI Net. Both of them are discussed in further subsections; however, given the limited time constraints and voluntary work needed from IBI Net members the Consultant strongly recommends focusing on the first block of activities.

4.2.3.1. EUSBSR flagship status

EUSBSR will be a key reference document particularly for allocation of the ETC programme support in the BSR for 2014-2020; hence, it is of particular importance for IBI Net. During the IBI Net partners meeting in Riga on February 7th, 2012 it was already agreed that IBI Net shall attempt to gain flagship status either under the EUSBSR priority area No.7 “To exploit the full potential of the region in research and innovation” or No.8 “Implementing the Small Business Act: to promote entrepreneurship, strengthen SMEs

and increase the efficient use of human resources”. Reception of the flagship status would highly boost the IBI Net chances for the future ETC funding allocations.

After the partners meeting in Riga the Consultant once more consulted an expert at INTERACT Point in Viborg, who strongly suggested that instead of starting with a formal letter to the “secretariats” of the priority areas an initial direct personal contact is made and a personal meeting is scheduled for duration of 2-3 hours. During such a meeting the IBI Net project and its benefits are presented and discussion is held on how IBI Net could help in fulfillment of the EUSBSR goals under the particular priority area and what concrete action steps shall be taken to receive a flagship status. Only then a formal letter is drafted with an application request. The Consultant suggests that the Riga Planning Region coordinates the process. On behalf of IBI Net the project partners arrange the following meetings in person:

- Sweden – Teknikdalen for priority area No.7:

Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communications SE-103 33 Stockholm	Mr.	Stefan	Cairén	+46 70 2089782	stefan.cairen@enterprise.ministry.se
VINNOVA SE-101 58 Stockholm	Mr.	Sven Gunnar	Edlund	+46 705487878	sven.gunnar.edlund@vinnova.se

- Poland – City Commune of Elblag for priority area No.7:

Ministry of Science and Higher Education Department of Strategies ul. Wspólna 1/3 00 529–Warsaw Poland	Mr.	Krzysztof	Gulda	+48 22 6217883 F: +48226289713	Krzysztof.Gulda@nauka.gov.pl
	Mr.	Maciej	Kielminski	+ 48 22 52 92 767	Maciej.kielminski@mnis.gov.pl

- Germany – TZV for priority area No.8:

German Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology Scharnorstrasse 34-37 10115 Berlin Germany	Ms.	Susanne	Rumpf	+49 30 18615-7563 F: +4930 18615-7240	susanne.rumpf@bmwi.bund.de BUERO-IIA2@bmwi.bund.de
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It is recommended to attain the flagship status as soon as possible before also other projects attempt doing this. IBI Net should discuss to fund travel costs for in person meetings for the responsible project partners, if relevant.

4.2.3.2. Other lobbying actions

As none of the current IBI Net partners claimed to have a particularly good inside contact in the DG Regio or other DGs, the Consultant recommends to present IBI Net in any

events where the individual partners participate in Brussels or when meeting the DG officials in their countries.

A particular event that IBI Net as a network or the Association could aim at participation is the Committee of the Regions OPEN DAYS during the European Week of Regions and Cities in 2012 or 2013. In 2012 event will be held from October 8-11, 2012 in Brussels and one of the three thematic priorities will be “Territorial cooperation: an asset for Europe”. The event hosts around 5000 participants with 100 workshops. Among others its participants include officials of the European, national, regional and local administrations and experts in the field of managing and evaluating of the Cohesion Policy programmes. About 10% of participants are from the EU institutions including the European Commission and Parliament and 10% from national government bodies. About 70% travel to Brussels specifically for the event.

There are two ways to approach the event: (1) is to formally apply to become an event partner or (2) to find a way of including the IBI Net presentation in the workshops of any of other event’s partners. The 2012 event proposes various types of partnerships. As the most appropriate the Consultants finds a “Meeting Place partner”, who is required to organizing one workshop and following networking session at the stand. During the workshop a presentation of minimum three projects, ideally from different countries shall be made. Projects should demonstrate good practice within a close collaboration between the local authorities, the local community and private interests and businesses.

Given the fact that IBI Net is a stand-alone project itself, it would have to find two other projects to apply for the official event partnership. Moreover the application deadline for 2012 is very close – March 5, 2012. Hence, the Consultant recommends researching, if any of the IBI Net partner regions, cities or development agencies are planning to participate and propose to present IBI Net as one of the three projects during their workshop.

More information about the event can be found here: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/conferences/od2012/theme.cfm .

5. NEW MEMBERS

Measures for attracting new members to strengthen operations of IBI Net in the Baltic Sea Region.

5.1. CONTACTS AND PROFILE OF POTENTIAL MEMBERS

5.1.1. ESTONIA

5.1.1.1. Tehnopol Startup Incubator

<u>Profile:</u>	No strict industry specialization. Accepts companies from different business areas and in various development states.
<u>Location:</u>	Tallinn
<u>Strength:</u>	Implemented mentoring and coaching system. Soft landing. Located in Tallinn Science Park Tehnopol close to the Tallinn University of Technology and IT College in Tehnopol.
<u>Person:</u>	Mr. Raido Pikkar, Startup Incubator Manager
<u>Email:</u>	raidopikkar@tehnopol.ee , info@tehnopol.ee
<u>Phone:</u>	+3724800200
<u>Web:</u>	http://tehnopol.ee/en/startup/what-we-do

5.1.1.2. ESA - Business Support and Credit Management Foundation

<u>Profile:</u>	ESA operates three business incubators. Ülemiste Business Incubator is focused mostly on technology-based service providers, Kopli Business Incubator on the Põhja-Tallinn (Northern Tallinn) district SME-s and Tallinn Creative Incubator on creative industries start-ups.
<u>Location:</u>	Tallinn
<u>Strength:</u>	Manager of 3 different incubators each with its specifics. Soft landing expertise.
<u>Person:</u>	Mr. Mart Brauer, Incubation Manager
<u>Email:</u>	mart@esa.ee
<u>Phone:</u>	+3726040631, +3725111920
<u>Web:</u>	http://esa.ee/eng/esa

5.1.1.3. Tartu Science Park incubator

<u>Profile:</u>	Focus on material technology, biotechnology and ICT.
<u>Location:</u>	Tartu.
<u>Strength:</u>	Strong focus on innovations. Direct links with Tartu University.
<u>Person:</u>	Mr. Toomas Noorem, Managing Director

Email: toomas.noorem@sciencepark.ee, info@sciencepark.ee
Phone: +3727460506
Web: <http://www.teaduspark.ee/en/TSP>

5.1.2. FINLAND

5.1.2.1. Alto University Start-up Center

Profile: Technology and creative industries.
Location: Aalto.
Strength: Coaching and mentoring. Strong links with Aalto University – a leader in promotion of entrepreneurship. Aalto university is linked with Aalto Venture Garage boot camp and Start-up Sauna events.
Person: Ms. Marika Paakkala, Project Director
Email: marika.paakkala@aalto.fi
Phone: +358408292286
Web: <http://www.start-upcenter.fi/en/yrityshautomo/>

5.1.2.2. Spinno Enterprise Center

Profile: High-tech and knowledge based companies.
Location: Innopoli (Espoo).
Strength: Coaching and mentoring. Strong links with Laurea University of Applied Sciences. Knowledge in IPR issues.
Person: Mr. Tuomas Maisala, Director
Email: tuomas.maisala@spinno.fi
Phone: +358405955547
Web: <http://spinno.fi/in-english/>

5.1.2.3. Propeli business incubator by Prizztech Ltd

Profile: Technology and industry focus.
Location: Pori
Strength: Part of a larger innovation support structure Prizztech, incl. Center of Expertise with clusters in energy, computing, maritime, R&D units, business consulting and coaching support. Strong links with academia (Pori University Centre, Satakunta University of Applied Sciences) and local municipality City of Pori that is 50% owner of Prizztech.
Person: Mr. Mikko Sainio, Project Manager
Email: mikko.sainio@prizz.fi , prizztech@prizz.fi
Phone: +358 40 588 1679
Web: <http://www.prizz.fi/sivu.aspx?taso=2&id=319>

5.1.3. DENMARK

5.1.3.1. Scion DTU - Science Park and Incubation unit of Technical University of Denmark

Profile: Commercialization of high-tech ideas.

Location: Copenhagen area – Hørsholm, Lyngby, Copenhagen.

Strength: Strong connection with venture capital (SEED Capital Demark) and ability to invest in start-ups. Direct link with Technical University of Denmark. Preferred partner in Accelerace program – a business acceleration program for a duration of 5 month established by Danish Government that runs 2 times per year. Could provide valuable insights to IBI Net how to organize its boot-camp/accelerator event

Person: Mr. Steen Donner, CEO

Email: sd@sciondtu.dk , info@sciondtu.dk

Phone: +4588708807

Web: <http://sciondtu.com/en-gb/do-%C3%BDou-want-to-develop-your-business.aspx>

5.1.3.2. NOVI Innovation A/S

Profile: Commercialization of high-tech ideas.

Location: Aalborg, north of Denmark.

Strength: As a state funded incubator has experience in good practice models how to organize state aid for the business incubation process.

Person: Mr. Jesper Jespersen, Managing Director

Email: jj@novi.dk , novi@novi.dk

Phone: +4596354510

Web: <http://novi.dk/en/investment/novi-innovation.html>

5.1.3.3. Agro Business Park incubator

Profile: Focus on agriculture, food, bioenergy and environmental technologies.

Location: Tjele (close to Viborg).

Strength: Competence in attraction of venture capital, both trough external links and direct ability to invest up to EUR 100 000 in startups. Consortium leader for Enterprise Europe Network offices in Denmark and could provide connection to this network also to IBI Net. The incubator can bring diverse industry expertise to IBI Net in terms of agriculture and foodbusiness.

Person: Mr. Lars Visbech Sørensen, CEO

Email: lvs@agropark.dk , info@agropark.dk

Phone: +4589992500, +4589992502

Web:

http://www.agropark.dk/index.php?action=text_pages_show&id=182&menu=82&menu=82

5.2. ACTIONS FOR ATTRACTION OF POTENTIAL MEMBERS

During the interviews the current partners of IBI Net were asked their views with regards to the network expansion requirements or limitations in terms of profile, geography and specialization of new members. Most partners preferred inviting new members - BIs or their management companies and keeping the geographical focus of the BSR. This is also what the Consultant recommends to keep as the unique value proposal of IBI Net. There was no preference among the current members as to the sectorial focus. Diversity was seen as an asset. As to preferred number of total members of the Association, the amount varied between 20 to over 200 or even with no limit. The Consultant, however, would recommend focusing on up to 50 members during the “take off” years – both for the Association and also for a virtual cooperation network - while credibility and usefulness of IBI Net are firmly established.

Approaches and key event for attraction of new members for IBI Net were already discussed under subsection New members⁵. Practical action steps are listed below. Responsibility for carrying out these actions have to be coordinated between the Riga Planning Region as the Lead Partner of IBI Net and the Executive Board of the Association as a future coordinating body behind IBI Net’s joint activities.

Steps:

1. Prepare and send an introductory email to twelve BIs profiled by the Consultant in the previous subsections. Draft for the email is presented in the next subsection of the Guidelines.
2. Make a follow-up phone call, establish personal contact with the leader of each of the BIs, personally invite them for the Final Conference of IBI Net in Riga in May 2012 and briefly find out how interested they seem to be in IBI Net.
3. Schedule a separate meeting session with all the new BIs who have arrived to the Final Conference in Riga, present the main benefits and future vision of IBI Net and offer them to involve in IBI Net, including an offer to join the Association.

Proposal for the introductory email text is attached in Annex 1.

6. COOPERATION AGREEMENT

Proposing key contents of IBI Net Cooperation Agreement for Business Incubators.

6.1. RATIONALE BEHIND THE COOPERATION DOCUMENT

Taken that the target of IBI Net after the end of the BSR Programme funding is to expand and attract new members not only for the Association, but also for IBI Net as a platform and broader scope cooperation network (which is not mutually exclusive with the Association membership, rather it can be a first step for deeper integration of new members), it is advised that both the existing IBI Net partners and also newcomers sign a document that provides a unified ideological and common understanding base for the key goals and cooperation principles of IBI Net. In this regard it is not realistic that a strong legally binding contract can be concluded, rather should such a document take a form of memorandum of understanding that partners try to follow with their best intent and ability.

6.2. KEY CONTENTS FOR MEMORANDUM

The Consultant suggests the following key parts and their contents to be included in the memorandum:

- Preamble – business incubation and cross-border cooperation is important

Business incubators are important mechanisms that not only support aspiring entrepreneurs and SMEs to survive during early stages of business development that are critical for many start-ups, but also provide structured and competent assistance and connects with the necessary networks of suppliers, partners and investors for commercializing ideas and growing businesses in the best possible manner. In the modern and globally connected world incubators and regions cannot stay competitive on their own and need to cooperate and share the best practice and contacts among them not only within regional or national borders, but also across the borders. Therefore, it is important to develop cross-border structures and networks that connect incubator managers and tenant companies.

- Goal of IBI Net – why it is established and what does it aim to achieve

IBI Net is a professional cooperation network of business incubators in the Baltic Sea Region established by business incubation professionals for the mutual benefit of business incubation managers and incubation companies. Goal of IBI Net is to provide a cooperation platform and network around the Baltic Sea that allows strengthening business incubators through cross-border transfer and sharing of knowledge and contacts and organization of joint events and activities. As a result, better support for development of SMEs and their internationalization needs, as well as strengthening of national innovation and entrepreneurship support systems and their closer integration within the BSR region shall be insured.

- Geographical focus

Although not exclusively limited to the IBI Net's primary focus is on partners, topicalities and activities in or for the benefit of the Baltic Sea Region countries.

- Basic cooperation principles

IBI Net network is based on the following core principles:

- *Voluntary participation* – all partners of IBI Net join or leave the network for their free will. In no activity of the network the participation is mandatory and a partner cannot be excluded from the network for not participating in some of the activities. Partners choose cooperation areas and tools that are of interest and relevance for their profile and needs and/or where they have the greatest competence and willingness to share for the benefit of others.
- *Open source network and willingness to share* – strength of IBI Net lays in the knowledge, contacts and strengths of its individual members that each of them is willing to share for the benefit of other partners and network as a whole. Willingness not only to take, but also to give and share to the network and other partners is the keystone of IBI Net idea.
- *Solidarity in cost covering* – IBI Net as a network and platform (not as the Association) does not have its own dedicated revenue sources. It is purely based on monetary or in-kind contributions either from its partners directly or international or national public funds that are attracted for the benefit of IBI Net through the efforts of partners. Hence, each partner should be willing to offer the most it can be it money, personnel time or infrastructure resources to host events and joint activities at least to cover its own share of expenses for the joint activities it participates in.
- *Quality over quantity* – IBI Net is focused on quality rather than quantity of cooperation activities and interaction of its members. It is not a goal of IBI Net to involve as many members as possible just for the sake of it, rather than fully utilize expertise and diversity of the existing partners.
- *Decentralized / rotating leadership* – within IBI Net as a platform and virtual network there is no centralized leadership, although coordination with the Association can be done. Each of the partners is free to propose their initiatives, invite partners to participate and take the leadership for implementing those activities.
- *Association membership* – to join the IBI Net network it is not mandatory to become a member of the IBI Net Association, although there will be certain services and benefits available either exclusively or on special conditions for the members of the Association. Each partner is free to decide when it wishes to integrate deeper into IBI Net and apply for the Association membership.

- Key cooperation areas and activities within IBI Net

IBI Net provides a platform and network for: (1) contacts, knowledge and best practice model exchange activities for BIs' staff and incubation companies; (2) organization of contact exchange, brokerage, investor attraction and acceleration events for incubation companies and provision of soft landing and internationalization services in the BSR, (3) supply of dedicated services and tools for enhancing performance of business incubators, including, but not limited to benchmarking, ICT tools for monitoring and performance evaluation of incubation companies; (4) coordination and implementation of joint lobbying activities for business incubation issues at regional, national and international level; and (5) development of new cross border cooperation projects and attraction of external funding sources. Beyond listed above also other cooperation areas and activities upon discretion of partners can be organized.

- Designated contact person for IBI Net

To ensure a basic administrative framework for the cooperation within IBI Net each of the partners agrees to provide a designated contact person for all IBI Net related matters within their organizations and ensure that this person on average has a time that is an equivalent of at least one full work day per month that can be spared for IBI Net issues.

7. POLITICAL SUPPORT

Proposals for increased political support on the national and regional levels for operations and development of Business Incubators within the innovation systems of the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) countries.

7.1. PROPOSAL FOR THE POLITICAL MEMORANDUM

Provided below are thesis and ideas to be included in the political support memorandum that could be signed between IBI Net members and politicians of each of the regions where IBI Net BIs are located.

- Preamble – need for the business incubators and their international cooperation

Startups receiving incubation support tend to exhibit significantly higher survival rates than those without an incubation support. Data vary, but studies indicate 60-87% survival rate of incubated ones vs. slightly over 40% of non-incubated ones⁵. Successfully incubated companies bring new innovations to the market and provide employment and economic activity in local neighborhoods; thus, serving as an important tool for the regional development. In the modern and globally connected world incubators and regions cannot stay competitive on their own and need to cooperate and share the best practice and contacts among them not only within regional or national borders, but also across the borders. The Baltic Sea Region is one of the key macroeconomic areas in Europe, where transnational cooperation can create synergies and promote the economic cohesion among the member states around the Baltic Sea and contribute to the overall competitiveness of the EU in the global context.

- Contribution to the flagship initiatives of EUROPE 2020 strategy

EUROPE 2020 focuses on smart, sustainable and inclusive growth that will allow the EU as a whole and the individual Member States to attain high levels of employment, productivity and cohesion. The strategy has flagship initiatives, among them “Innovation Union” that directly contributes to the *smart* growth, “An industrial policy for the globalization era” that addresses *sustainable* growth and “An Agenda for New Skills and Jobs” that targets *inclusive* growth.

Business incubators and IBI Net as a dedicated network of such incubators can directly address and contribute to all three areas of growth as defined in EUROPE 2020. First, business incubators are important mechanisms that help to commercialize innovations; second, they facilitate creation and growth of SMEs that is one of the ten key actions set out for European industrial competitiveness⁶; and thirdly, they foster job creations that is one of the key actions defined under “The Agenda for new skills and jobs”⁷. Hence, the

⁵ www.infodev.org/en/Document.733.pdf

<http://www.businessnewsdaily.com/272-incubators-increase-small-business-success.html>

⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/industrial-competitiveness/industrial-policy/index_en.htm

⁷ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=958>

EU, national and regional level support for business incubators and their networks is crucial for achievement of EUROPA 2020 goals.

- Contribution to the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region sets out the first and illustrative strategy for the macro region in Europe and will be an instrumental tool for helping to achieve the goals of EUROPE 2020 in the BSR. Business incubators within the IBI Net network and the network itself with its dedicated focus on the BSR and through assistance in commercialization of innovations and support to SMEs development directly contribute to goals of the two priority areas of EUSBSR - No.7 “To exploit the full potential of the region in research and innovation” or No.8 “Implementing the Small Business Act: to promote entrepreneurship, strengthen SMEs and increase the efficient use of human resources”. To underline the relevance of its objectives and commitments for fulfillment of EUSBSR IBI Net is also applying for the flagship status under the EUSBSR.

- Call for continuous political support

Given the importance of business incubation, its contributions to fulfillment of goals set for the EU and the BSR in the coming years until 2020, it is important that a continuous support from international, national and local politicians around the Baltic Sea is provided for the business incubators and IBI Net as their BSR networking platform. By signing this document the undersigned politicians agree to:

- to provide lobby support in representing interests of local business incubators at regional and national levels, e.g., in communication with branch ministries or agencies responsible for business incubation matters;
- promote and help with lobbying IBI Net as a BSR wide cooperation platform and network of incubators at the BSR and EU level political and fund management institutions, e.g., provide information about activities of IBI Net through direct contact meetings with other politicians, civil-servants or policy makers, invite representatives of IBI Net to participate in events and presentations done internationally when appropriate;
- consider possibilities to provide financial and in-kind assistance to local business incubators and joint activities of IBI Net;
- invite representatives and experts from local incubators and IBI Net to participate in policy making activities for the future support schemes of business incubation on regional, national or international level.

7.2. ACTION STEPS FOR SIGNING THE MEMORANDUM

It is proposed at least one leading politician representing each of the respective regions is invited to the IBI Net BI Forum and Final Conference in May 2012 in Riga and that during the conference there is a dedicated memorandum signature session organized with the presence of mass media representatives.

Other actions for gaining support of local and national politicians for activities of IBI Net and incubation are already describe in subsection 3.3.

8. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY IN LATVIAN

IBI Net (Biznesa inkubatoru tīkla) Vadlīniju (turpmāk – Vadlīnijas) izstrādi Baltijas jūras reģiona programmas 2007-2013 projekta „Starptautisks biznesa inkubatoru tīkls” (turpmāk - IBI Net) ietvaros no 2011.gada decembra līdz 2012.gada marta mēnesim veica SIA „DEA Baltika” (turpmāk – Konsultants).

Vadlīniju tapšanā savu ieguldījumu sniedza IBI Net projekta partneru organizāciju pārstāvji, tajā iesaistīto biznesa inkubatoru (turpmāk - BI) pārstāvji, atsevišķi projekta Vadības komitejas locekļi, kā arī ārējie biznesa inkubācijas, inovāciju, biznesa uzsākšanas un ES finanšu eksperti. Kopumā tika veiktas 19 intervijas. Intervējamo personu saraksts ir pievienots ziņojumam kā 2.pielikums.

Ziņojuma struktūra balstīta uz Tehniskajā specifikācijā un Konsultanta piedāvātajā metodoloģijā aprakstītajiem konkrētajiem darba uzdevumiem.

Sadalā „Nākotnes sadarbības ietvars” Konsultants galveno akcentu liek uz to, kāda ir IBI Net pievienotā vērtība – ar ko šis biznesa inkubatoru tīkls atšķiras no citiem starptautiskiem biznesa inkubatoru tīkliem un kā šo vērtību pienācīgi izmantot nākotnē. Kā IBI Net raksturojošas atšķirīgās vērtības tiek minētas: (1) pasākumi, projekti, zināšanu pārnese no BI uz BI; (2) fokuss uz Baltijas jūras reģionu (turpmāk – BJR) un (3) vadāms izmērs un pietiekami personīgs tīkls, kurā viens otru pazīst.

Tiek piedāvātas konkrētas sadarbības jomas, formas un instrumenti, ar kuru palīdzību audzēt IBI Net gan kvalitatīvi, gan kvantitatīvi. Galvenās sadarbības jomas: zināšanu, informācijas un labās prakses apmaiņa par BI vadības jautājumiem, monitoringa un novērošanas metožu un instrumentu izstrāde, kopīgas valodas, standartu un darbības novērtēšana, atbalsts inkubējamo uzņēmumu iecīšanai citu valstu tirgos, finanšu un investoru piesaiste, IBI Net mārketing un lobēšana, jaunu projektu izstrāde.

IBI Net iespējama gan formāla sadarbība caur jaunizveidoto Asociāciju, gan arī neformāli kontakti. IBI Net Asociācija tiek uzskatīta par galveno sadarbības instrumentu. Pirmajos gados Konsultants iesaka Asociācijai fokusēties uz zināšanu apmaiņu starp BI darbiniekiem, kopīgas valodas „atrasānu”, BJR BI salīdzinošo novērtēšanu, IBI Net portāla un IKT instrumenta tālāko izstrādi, kontaktu apmaiņas, starpniecības un nelielu „boot-camp” pasākumu īstenošanu, „mīkstās piezemēšanās” paketes un īstermiņa kopīgo atbalsta pakalpojumu piedāvāšanu inkubējamajiem uzņēmumiem, kas ierodas biznesa vizītē citā dalībvalstī, IBI Net lobēšanu institūcijās, kuras plāno BJR nākotni, kā arī ES fondus, un tālāku kopējo sadarbības projektu izstrādi.

Attiecībā uz vadības kapacitātes celšanu tiek secināts, ka galvenā joma, kura interesē IBI Net partnerus ir koučings un mentoringi. Tā interesē visus IBI Net partnerus izņemot Teknidalen un TVZ. Citas interesējošas apmācību jomas ir vispārējais BI organizatoriskais modelis, tai skaitā finansēšanas modelis un finanšu vadības labā prakse, finansējuma un investoru piesaiste, inkubējamo uzņēmumu novērtēšana, atbalsts BI uzņēmumiem jaunu tirgu iekarošanā. IBI Net partneri kā pieredzējušāko un attiecīgi potenciālo apmācību sniedzēju no sava vidus uzskata Teknidalen. Tādejādi tiek norādīts, ka zviedru modelis var kalpot par kompetences avotu daudzu iepriekšminēto jomu apguvei.

Par IBI Net mārketinga galveno mērķa auditoriju tiek atzīti citi BI BJR, kurus tīkls vēlētos redzēt, kā savus partnerus. Mārketingot sevi IBI Net ir svarīgi norādīt uz praktiskiem labumiem, kurus gūst tā biedri, t.i. iespēja BI darbiniekiem apmainīties ar zināšanām un pieredzi, atbalsts ieciešanai citu dalībvalstu tirgos un investoru piesaistei, kopīgi sadarbības projekti. Kā galvenie informēšanas līdzekļiem tiek minēti IBI Net organizētie pasākumi, citi atbilstoši pasākumi, personīgi ielūgumi/rekomendācijas, jauni pārrobežu sadarbības projekti, internets un sociālie tīkli. Būtu svarīgi uzrunāt arī citas BI, inovāciju, risku kapitāla un biznesa engēļu asociācijas un tīklus BJR, ES un pasaulē, lai informētu tos par IBI Net un tā lomu BJR.

Politiskā atbalsta gūšanai Konsultants iesaka IBI Net partneriem darīt par sevi zināmu un uzturēt labas attiecības ar institūcijām, kurām ir svarīga nozīme BI nākotnē gan konkrētājā reģionā, gan dalībvalstī kopumā, kā arī ES.

Attiecībā uz IBI Net turpmāko finansēšanu tiek aplūkotas divas iespējas: (1) iekšējie resursi un (2) ārējā finansējuma piesaiste. Lielākā daļa partneru piedāvā personāla laika un citus nemateriālus ieguldījumus. Teknidalen, TVZ, RTU un baltkrievu partneri piedāvā arī finanšu ieguldījumus. Starp ārējā finansējuma avotiem tiek minēta Baltijas jūras programmas pagarinājuma iespēja, nākamā plānošanas perioda 2014 – 2020 finansējums, īpaši, Eiropas teritoriālās sadarbības programmas, kā arī tādas ES programmas, kā COSME, Horizon 2020 u.c. Kā svarīga aktivitāte nākotnes finansējuma piesaistei tiek minēta IBI Net lobēšana ES institūcijās, bet īpaši flagship projekta statusa ieguve Eiropas Baltijas jūras reģiona stratēģijas kontekstā.

Konsultants ir sagatavojis sarakstu ar 12 potenciālu jauno IBI Net biedru profiliem un kontaktiem no Igaunijas, Somijas un Dānijas, kā arī izstrādājis uzaicinājuma e-pasta vēstules projektu. IBI Net tiek ieteikts sākumā šiem BI uzrakstīt e-pasta vēstuli, kam sekotu telefona zvans, kurā BI pārstāvji būtu jāuzaicina uz IBI Net nobeiguma pasākumu Rīgā 2012.gada maijā. Šī pasākuma ietvaros IBI Net būtu jānotur atsevišķas pārrunas ar šo potenciālo biedru pārstāvjiem, pastāstot par ieguvumiem no IBI Net tīkla.

Piedāvātā BI sadarbības līguma galvenā nozīme ir vienoties par kopīgu izpratni, kā pamatu tīkla tālākai darbībai. Saturiski līgumā ietveramas šādas sadaļas: ievads, kurā līgumslēdzējas puses apliecina BI un pārrobežu sadarbības svarīgumu, IBI Net mērķi, ģeogrāfiskais fokuss, galvenie sadarbības principi, jomas un aktivitātes, kā arī galvenā kontaktpersona.

Ziņojuma noslēgumā tiek piedāvātas tēzes politiskajam memorandam, kā arī soļi, kas veicami šī memoranda parakstīšanai. Politiskajā memorandā iekļaujamas šādas sadaļas: ievads, kurā tā parakstītāji apliecina BI un pārrobežu sadarbības svarīgumu, norāde uz ieguldījumu Eiropas 2020 un Eiropas Baltijas jūras reģiona stratēģiju īstenošanā, kā arī aicinājums turpmākam politiskajam atbalstam. Tiek rosināts, lai vismaz viens vadošs politiķis, kas pārstāv attiecīgu reģionu, tiktu uzaicināts uz IBI Net BI Forumu un gala konferenci Rīgā 2012.gada maijā. Konferences laikā jāparedz atsevišķa sesija šāda memoranda parakstīšanai.

ANNEX 1 – INTRODUCTORY EMAIL PROPOSAL FOR NEW MEMBERS

Dear Ms./Mr.,

It is our pleasure to introduce you to IBI Net – the Baltic Sea Region intercountry business incubator network, which was established as a result of the cooperation project among six countries funded under the Baltic Sea Region Programme.

IBI Net is focused and reasonably personalized (not anonymous) network of business incubation professionals - managers and staff of incubators - to follow and exchange the best practice developments and contacts, as well provide members with professional advice and lobby for support of business incubation issues. IBI Net's key activities include: organization of knowledge exchange activities for incubators staff on specific issues (e.g. coaching, incubation company evaluation); benchmarking and performance evaluation of incubators; development and provision of ICT tools for the incubation management and monitoring, organization of contact exchange, brokerage and mini-boot camp events for incubation companies in the BSR; soft landing and internationalization services; lobbying and development of new cross border cooperation projects.

We are currently looking for new IBI Net partners from your country. Therefore, we would like to invite a representative from your incubator's management team to visit the Business Incubators Forum and Final Conference of IBI Net project on May 14-15, 2012 in Riga, Latvia. Also we encourage you to bring 1 or 2 representatives from the best companies in your incubator along with you as during the Forum day they will have great networking opportunities with other companies from incubators in the Baltic Sea Region. We are glad to inform that travel and accommodation costs for up to 2 people in total will be covered by IBI Net. During the Riga event you will be able to get to know IBI Net and its partners in more depth and we will be happy to find out your interests for future cooperation.

Shall you have further interest in the subject we will gladly provide you with more details about IBI Net and the event in May in Riga. Meanwhile, we would like to ask you to answer the following questions:

- 1) Short profile of your business incubator, including your main strengths?
- 2) Name, contact information and short profile of each person coming to the event in May in Riga?
- 3) Key expectations from participation in IBI Net network and closer cooperation with other BSR incubators?

In case you have any future questions do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely Yours,
Ms. Inga Brieze
Project Leader of IBI Net

Mr. Sture Ericsson
Chairman of the Executive Board
IBI Net Association (registered in Germany)

ANNEX 2 – LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

- Project partners

COUNTRY	NAME, SURNAME	ADMINISTRATION	POSITION
Latvia	Jānis Miezeris	Riga Planning Region	Head of Administration
	Inga Brieze	Riga Planning Region	Project Manager IBI Net
	Rihards Zariņš	Riga Technical University, Creative Andrejsala incubator	Head of Innovation Incubator
	Dace Leveika	Riga Region Business Development Incubator with three units in Tukums, Limbaži, Ogre	Project Manager
	Elīna Stīpniece	Riga Region Business Development Incubator with three units in Tukums, Limbaži, Ogre	Project Manager
Belarus	Lyudmila Shmygova, PhD, as.prof.	State Enterprise "Scientific and Technological Park BNTU "Polytechnic"	Director of InterUniversity R&D Marketing Center
Germany	Mario Kokowsky	Center of Technology Western-Pomerania ZTW	Managing Director
Poland	Anita Pawlak	Municipal Office in Elbląg	Chief of Investors Bureau Coaching coordinator
	Beata Dziuba	Municipal Office in Elbląg	Communication Officer
Norway	Øyvind Nordstrand	Innovation Centre Hedmark	Project Manager
Sweden	Sture Ericsson	Teknikdalen Foundation	Managing Director
Russia	Kasimov Timur	Leningrad Region Business Support Center	Deputy Director

- Project Steering Committee

COUNTRY	NAME, SURNAME	ADMINISTRATION	POSITION
Latvia	Edvīns Bartkevičs	Riga Planning Region Development Council	Chairman
	Mareks Zeltiņš	Riga Technical University	Vice Rector Strategic Development Issues
Norway	Kjell Vaagen	Hedmark County Council	Project Manager TRUST Hedmark-Dalarna

- External experts in fields of business incubation, innovation, start-up support

COUNTRY	NAME, SURNAME	ADMINISTRATION	POSITION
Latvia	Jānis Stabulnieks	Latvian Technological Centre	CEO
	Sandris Mūriņš	1/4 Satori – Birojnica, co-working space and network idejuTalka (doTalk) – events that help large group of individuals and organizations use collective intelligence to get ideas into action and to address common challenges.	Managing partner Founder, leader, organizer
	Helmuts Bēms	4m-Investments LTD	Chairman of the board Risk-investor, entrepreneur

- Boot-camp participant, start-up entrepreneur

COUNTRY	NAME, SURNAME	ADMINISTRATION	POSITION
Latvia	Kārlis Sproģis	www.nippo.ie – collaborative housing search engine, which was idea developed during the Copenhagen Startupbootcamp	Co-founder, entrepreneur Boot-camp participant

- Expert on European Territorial Cooperation programs development and implementation

COUNTRY	NAME, SURNAME	ADMINISTRATION	POSITION
Denmark / Latvia	Ieva Kalniņa	INTERACT Point Viborg	Expert