FREE NETWORK

Fostering Research-based Entrepreneurship and the Development of Spin-off Companies in Central America

http://freenetwork-project.eu/

@FreeNetwork2016

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Overview

The FREE Network (FREENET) project is promoted by the European Commission in the scheme of the Erasmus+ program. It will last from September 2016 until September 2019.

Wider Objective:
Improvement business opportunities for research-based entrepreneurs, promoting spin-off services in HEIs and strengthening the innovation ecosystem in Central America.

Specific Project Objective/s:
- Creation and modernization of spin-off support services within 12 CA Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) through institutional and capacity building.
- Use of a regional network and platform.

According to the World Bank, the Latin America must establish an environment that allows entrepreneurs to emerge, compete and innovate, since a chronic lack of innovation in the region is stifling business growth and competitiveness. Entrepreneurs are key players in reducing low productivity to create quality jobs and lasting economic benefit to the region. The FREE Network project follows the recommendations of the World Bank on the importance of improving the framework conditions for innovation, creating an innovative business class and encourage the development of spin-off in CA.

This lack of institutional regulations that support the creation and development of spin-off, together with the absence in most HEIs CA specific units and qualified skilled personnel is hampering the transition from a traditional economy to a KBE in CA. By creating a specialized regional network and improving knowledge transfer process through the creation of spin-off, CA can increase innovation, increase productivity, create better employment opportunities and addressing social challenges.

FREE Network is fully in line with the development strategies of partner countries of CA and the problems identified, as it will improve business opportunities for entrepreneurs based on research that promote the services resulting in HEIs by creating institutions and a regional network capabilities and strengthening the innovation ecosystem in CA.

The FREE Network is implemented in 12 CA HEIs (originating from 6 different CA countries: Panama, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Costa Rica) and 3 EU HEIs (Spain, Italy and United Kingdom).

STRUCTURE OF THE PROJECT

WP.1.: INNOVATION SUPPORT SERVICES MAPPING & BENCHMARKING

In-depth needs analysis on research-based entrepreneurship in AC countries provides a good insight of the situation of the CA HEIs in terms of spin-off regulations and units supporting research-based entrepreneurs.

WP.2.: CAPACITY BUILDING VIA TRAINING

Capacity building for Innovation Support Offices (ISO) staff. Participants are targeted via face-to-face and on-line workshops that trainees adapt for the implementation of the pilot courses for students and researchers.

WP.3.: INSTITUTIONAL BUILDING: CREATION/ADAPTATION OF INNOVATION SUPPORT OFFICES

Creation/adaptation of ISOs provides to AC HEIs the institutional legislation, qualified HR and relevant infrastructure for offering spin-off support services. The ISOs will develop their strategy specifying mission, vision and list of services for students and researchers.

WP.4.: NETWORKING & SUSTAINABILITY

Development of a strategy and sustainability plan with specific references on sources of funding and time frames. Network is enlarged with more CA HEIs and relevant stakeholders. It establishes links among CA HEIs facilitating application for joint projects and consultancy services to other CA HEIs out of the network.

WP.5.: DISSEMINATION

Solid base for intensively disseminating the Network activities, fostering that new members join the initiative, raising awareness of the importance of setting up ISOs within CA HEIs, and widening the impact and exploitation of the project results beyond the consortium.

WP.6.: QUALITY CONTROL

Definition of methodology and survey based on EU experience, inputs from 12 CA HEIs and advise by SENACYT. Suggestions from 2 external QA expert.

WP.7.: PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Definition and implementation of an in-depth strategy and actions for project sustainability involving the private sector, potential donors, HEI managers and National/regional HEI/R&D/Environment authorities.

F R E E N E T   Partnership

Universidad de Alicante (UA) – Spain (project coordinator)

Instituto Tecnológico de Costa Rica (ITCR) – Costa Rica

University of Genova (UNIGE) - Italy

Universidad Galileo (Galileo) – Guatemala

Universidad Tecnológica de El Salvador (UTEC) - El Salvador

Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU) – United Kingdom

Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala (USAC) – Guatemala

Universidad Americana (UAM) – Nicaragua

Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras (UNAH) – Honduras

Universidad del Istmo (UDI) - Panama

Universidad de El Salvador (UES) – El Salvador

Universidad Latinoamericana de Ciencia y Tecnología (ULACIT) - Costa Rica

Universidad Tecnológica de Honduras (UTH) - Honduras

Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Nicaragua (UNAN-Leòn) – Nicaragua

Universidad Técnológica de Panamá (UTP) - Panama