LEARNING WORK SHOP 2:
TECHNOLOGY SCREENING WITH WORLD-CLASS ASSISTANCE

September 9th 2009, Oxford

This project is implemented through the CENTRAL EUROPE Programme co-financed by the ERDF.

1. DIRECTORY

2. PARTICIPANT LIST

Organisation	Name
PVA Mecklenburg-Vorpommern AG	**Lars Krüger**
SAXEED Center for Entrepreneurship Chemnitz University of Technology	**Peter Häfner**
SAXEED Center for Entrepreneurship Chemnitz University of Technology	**Tobias Meyhöfer**
Slovak Academy of Sciences	**Marian Janek**
Slovak Academy of Sciences	**Silvester Salis**
ITG Salzburg	**Christian Prucher**
ITG Salzburg	**Sebastian Huber**
ITG Salzburg	**Thomas Reisinger**
University of Zilina/Institute of Competitiveness and Innovations	**Marian Majchrak**
University of Zilina/Institute of Competitiveness and Innovations	**Michal Dibdiak**
University of Zilina/Institute of Competitiveness and Innovations	**Peter Skorik**
IRI-UL, Ljubljana	**Manca Poglajen**
IRI-UL, Ljubljana	**Peter Štrukelj**
Inno AG	**Robin Grankvist**
Inno AG	**Joakim Ketonen**
Forum Gryf, Univ. of Szczecin	**Rafał Rak**
Eurogroup Consulting SRL	**Alessio Scopa**
ValDeal Innovations Ltd.	**Peter A. Csíkos**
ValDeal Innovations Ltd.	**Klara Stumpf**
University of Eötvös Lóránd	**Györgyi Antoni**
University of Eötvös Lóránd	**Alexandra Horváth**
ISIS Innovations Ltd	**Tom Hockaday**
ISIS Innovations Ltd	**Terry Pollard**

3. INTRODUCTION

In conjunction to the first CERIM study visit to the UK, a learning workshop was held in Oxford the 9. September 2009. Organisers of the work shop were CERIM-partner no. 2, ValDeal Innovation, together with a team from ISIS Innovation Ltd, the technology transfer organisation at Oxford University. The ISIS-team consisted of the managing director of ISIS, Tom Hockaday and project manager, Terry Pollard. The workshop was divided into two sessions, one about technology screening and the other about practical case-assistance from the ISIS-team.

4. TECHNOLOGY SCREENING

In the first session, the CERIM partners were trained in the art of technology screening and initial evaluation of technologies regarding their commercial potential. Initially the ISIS-team presented the "Technology Transfer Triage", which is the method ISIS uses for this purpose. According to this method an invention is generally only worth trying to turn into a marketable innovation if it lives up to the following three criteria;

- It is protectable - preferebly by IPR (patents, trademarks etc.)
- It has sufficient novelty and market size - there are no similar products on the market and there is at least one possible market that is big enough for the technology to gain revenue.
- Its impact is consistent with the institutional mission - the commissioner of the tech transfer organisation, often being a university, should consider the technology or the probable outcome of the commercialisation process, to be inline with its mission (e.g. contributing to regional growth, fighting a particular disease in the third world, decrease emission of green-house gases).

After presenting the "Technology Transfer Triage", the ISIS-team gave the CERIM-partners a list of cases consisting of a brief description of a few (roughly 12) technologies and a background story to each of them. These where all (more or less) real-life technology transfer cases from ISIS, ranging from a malaria-drug and software for calculating power-consumption, to a new tent. The CERIM-partners were told to rank the cases according to their individual priorities as technology transfer managers (e.g commercial potential, institutional mission). Then the partners were divided into groups of five and were told to together decide upon a common ranking. The results were present for the other groups and the ISIS-team noted how each team ranked the cases and then put together a synthesised ranking list for all groups.

Afterwards, the ISIS-team presented how they had evaluated these cases and what happened to them in the end. Interestingly, one of the lowest ranked cases by the CERIM-partners (software for calculating power-consumption), the ISIS-team had ranked very high and it was about to become a major success. This naturally could be due to the fact that the case descriptions were not informative enough. Another reason could be the limited time provided for evaluation and group discussion. This was, however, intentional, according to the ISIS-team since a good technology transfer manager should be able to screen plenty of technologies in short time. This may apply for a large university as Oxford, but most of

the CERIM-partners do not have access to that many inventions to screen, at least not now. Nevertheless, the exercise was appreciated by the CERIM-partners and the learning from this session can be summarized as follows;

- Unintentionally most people rank cases which one understands (e.g. being in the same field of technology as one is educated in) or has experience in, higher than others. By doing this, it is quite likely that many potentially successful cases are discharged due to lack competence/experience by the technology transfer managers. This is easily avoided by working with external experts within specific fields which the technology transfer organisation lack competence in.
- It is difficult to consider the institutional mission if this is not clearly communicated by the commissioner (university management). By having an open discussion with the university management this problem might be avoided.
- When considering potential markets and market sizes for an innovation, it is important to try see the issue from different angels. The most obvious market might not be the most lucrative or appropriate one (e.g. due to regulations, competitors, etc.). In order to see the issue from different angels, a cross-functional technology transfer team that is discussing these issues together, is often required.

Figur 1: CERIM partner Klara Stumpf of ValDeal Innovation presenting a real „technology transfer case" for ISIS Innovations at Oxford University.

5. CASE ASSISTANCE

In the case-assistance session, the CERIM-partners had the opportunity to present real-life technology transfer cases from their respective regional universities or public research institutions, for the ISIS-team and the whole of the CERIM-partnership. Each case, or a specific problem area within a case, was discussed within the closed group in order to get new angels of approach from other professionals.

Important conclusions from the discussions were:

- The importance of strong IP: sometimes a patent on a given field of usage is stronger than protecting the whole technology of the production itself.
- Another theme was a question on software value making where we went through the possibilities of generating profit when we don't have a real chance to sell traditional data media. Open source is one solutions but not applicable in all fields.
- Whenever we get to know about the non-usability of an innovation the project has to be closed down even though investments have been made. The sooner we know, the less we loose: a quick and professional evaluation is a crucial factor.

6. SUMMARY

The learning workshop in Oxford was a much appreciated event by the CERIM-partners. The ISIS-team made the technology screening workshop very realistic, since they provided real-life cases and also could tell what happened to these cases in the end. The assistance-session was a valuable opportunity for the CERIM partners to share some of their technology transfer problems and receive experienced advice from the partnership and the well-reputed ISIS Innovation team. The learning from this event will lead to a higher professionalism among the CERIM-partners regarding technology screening and initial evaluation of commercial potential. The regional universities and public research institutions, together with the industry in Central Europe will benefit from this increased professionalism and it might in the long term lead to a stronger sector of knowledge intensive European companies and a revitalisation of markets through innovative companies.