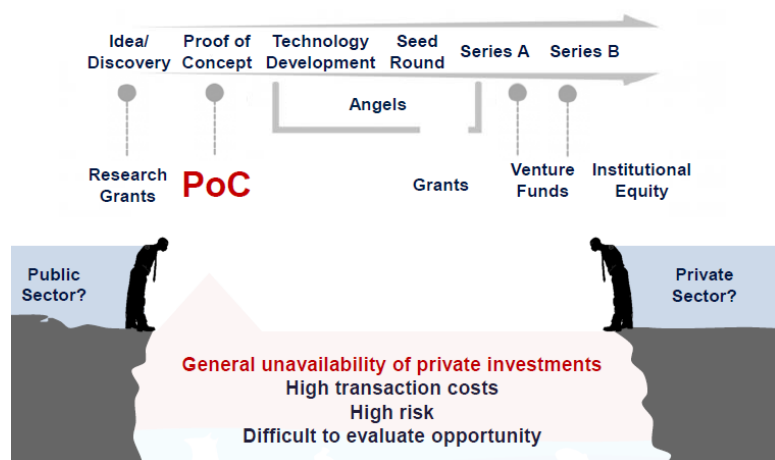


The European Commission is organising on 21-22 September 2017 the Workshop on Proof of Concept (PoC) in South Eastern Europe *Best Practices, Challenges and Opportunities for Promoting Technology Transfer and Innovation*

Proof of Concept financing (PoC) can facilitate the validation (prototype, demonstrator, proof of market, etc.) and assessment of commercialisation options for technologies developed within Public Research Organisations (PROs) and micro-enterprises/SMEs in South Eastern Europe. The objective of providing PoC financing is to provide financial support to researchers to help them in successfully converting good research into good business. PoC funding is currently at a modest stage of development in South Eastern Europe and, in particular, in the Western Balkans.

Technology Transfer and the commercialisation of the results of publicly funded research for the benefit of the economy and of society is now an established objective for developed economies, including the EU. However, support for technology transfer activities – and proof of concept in particular – remains limited in South Eastern Europe. This is for several reasons including culture, tradition and framework conditions. However, it is also linked to a lack of funding and capacity to addresses the critical gap between public research funding for frontier and applied research and early stage private sector funding, often available via business angels or via innovation vouchers (grants).

The diagram below illustrates the typical funding cycle for research commercialisation projects. While this varies depending on the particular sector (ITC, Life Sciences etc.) for the majority of technology transfer deals the most crucial funding element remains the PoC, which is the stage at which an idea or invention is validated. Before the validation process, it is unclear if an idea or discovery will work and it is difficult to evaluate its commercial potential. In addition, transaction costs are high. All these challenges make investment at the PoC level unattractive for private investors and create a gap and market failure that can be addressed through intelligent deployment of public funds, such as grants.



Source: Copyrights belong to Oxford University Innovation

Specific Objectives of PoC financing:

1. To provide support for a range of ancillary activities that can advance Technology Readiness Levels¹ and accelerate technologies to a point where they are 'Investment Ready';
2. To provide early stage financial support to address, in particular, the 'gap' between Technology Readiness Levels 3 and 4: Proof of Concept and Laboratory Validation;
3. To increase the capacity of researchers and intermediaries to identify robust routes to market and build strong commercialisation strategies;
4. To encourage knowledge exchange and technology transfer across and beyond the region.

¹ http://www.earto.eu/fileadmin/content/03_Publications/The_TRL_Scale_as_a_R_I_Policy_Tool_-_EARTO_Recommendations_-_Final.pdf

Content/Objectives

This workshop intends to explore best practices in the creation and management of PoC support programmes and to consider possibilities for the creation of additional PoC support schemes in the region. PoC support schemes would address the earliest and most risky element of the technology transfer funding cycle and enable researchers and PROs to validate discoveries and ease the process of maturing technologies to a point where alternative sources of investment (including private) become available.

The conclusions of this meeting are also expected to feed into broader political developments, in particular in relation to the Berlin process.

Participants will include the European Investment Bank (along with the Fund) that plays a major role in the region through, among others, the Western Balkans Enterprise Development & Innovation Facility (WB EDIF).

The JRC and, in particular, its Intellectual Property and Technology Transfer Unit, are in possession of operational and technical expertise in the domains of Technology and Knowledge Transfer. JRC flagship activities and tools (training, capacity building, studies) are highly relevant to the harmonisation and development of RDI in South Eastern Europe.

Counterparties / Co-organisers and Location

Trieste has been selected to host this workshop, as an area with one of the greatest concentrations of research centres in Italy. It also lies at the crossroads of three macro-regions: the Adriatic-Ionian Region, the Alpine Region and the Danube Region. AREA Science Park, that will host this event, sits at the centre of a dynamic innovation-based eco-system and has an extensive track record of supporting technology transfer and high-technology based business creation in the region.

Participants

The workshop will consist of two half-days and intends to assemble a plethora of innovation practitioners with an interest in PoC and regional stakeholders from EU Member States, enlargement and neighbourhood countries covered by the Adriatic-Ionian, the Alpine and the Danube macro-regional strategies.

Participants are likely to include: innovation and entrepreneurship policy-makers, fund managers, representatives of academia and technology transfer offices early stage and venture capital investors. The number of participants is estimated at around 60-80, while the number of speakers will be in the region of 10-15.

DRAFT Programme

Thursday, 21 September 2017

13:00 – 14:00	Registration and Lunch
14:00 – 15:00	Welcome address
15:00 – 16:00	Introductory discussion on how to learn from successful EU examples and adapt to local needs
16:00 – 16:30	Coffee Break
16:30 - 17.45	EU initiatives – what works in the Proof of Concept space and why?
20:30	Networking dinner

Friday, 22 September 2017

09:00 – 09:30	Registration and welcome coffee
09:30 – 10:30	Regional initiatives – examples and possible models for Proof of Concept structures
10:30 – 11:00	Coffee break
11:00 – 12:15	Discussion and consultations with participants
12:15 – 12:30	Closing and conclusions
12:30 – 14:00	Lunch and departures