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CHANGE OF PERSPECTIVE PROGRAMME TOOLKIT

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CHANGE OF PERSPECTIVE PROGRAMME

Exploring more strategic partnership opportunities between SMEs and academia, academics and business professionals will exchange their workplaces for a working day to experience a different environment.

BENEFITS FOR SMEs:

- Build networks and relationships with subject matter experts
- Access to the HEI staff, knowledge and future employees.
- Deeper understanding of what the HEI has to offer its business.
- Access funding or resources for research or education.

BENEFITS FOR HEIs:

- Access to industry professionals' expertise and insight.
- Deeper understanding of what industry has to offer the HEI.
- Potential to build further collaboration.
- Understanding of how industry operates, challenges and opportunities.
- Access funding or resources for research or education.

TARGET GROUPS:

- Engineering SMEs participating in the training programme.
- Engineering SMEs from clusters/regions of the project.
- Academics interested in collaborating with industry.

CONTENT DELIVERY AND FORMAT

Six - Eight hours (one working day) of activities, interactions or exchanges between academics and engineering SME(s) professionals.

Development of a joint research project.

PROCESS

1. Promotion and registration.
2. Planning of activities/interactions.
3. Activities/interactions by professionals and academics.
4. Evaluate both parties' experiences.

Programme Overview

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- Delivery
- Recruiting participants
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SME Resources

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- Introduction
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1. Programme Overview: How to get started

Exploring more strategic partnership opportunities between SMEs and academia, academics and business professionals will exchange their workplaces for a working day to experience a different environment.

As the programme is to be delivered across different European regions, the content has been designed to be highly flexible. Each institution can localise the delivery to meet local needs.



The Change of Perspective Programme is designed to facilitate engineering SME professionals to experience and engage with the academic environment and personnel for a working day (6-8 hours) and for academics to experience and engage with a business environment for a working day (6-8 hours). Each side of the University Business Collaboration (UBC) relationship perspective-taking from the other in order to deepen understanding and knowledge of where the other party operates to further enhance collaboration and innovation in the future.

UBC requires knowledge integration, for which perspective-taking can be very beneficial. This is an opportunity for academics to really get to observe, understand and question how an SME works on a day-to-day basis and how the HEI can be of maximum benefit within these operations, and vice versa for the SME professional within the HEI environment. Both parties engage, ask questions and comprehend where the other is operating from on a daily basis to observe, understand and question how an SME works on a day-to-day basis and how the HEI can be of maximum benefit within these operations, and vice versa for the SME professional within the HEI environment. Both parties engage, ask questions and comprehend where the other is operating from on a daily basis. This opportunity can be maximised with proper planning and internal collaboration within the HEI and SME. This toolkit aims to provide templates (easily adapted locally) to aid planning, implementation and evaluation.

Checklist for project partners when embarking on the delivery within their region...

1. Preparation of the promotion materials for the HEIs to use in announcing the programme
2. Identification of the participating SMEs and academics (suggested to identify SMEs with interest in collaborating with industry)
3. Identification of areas of interest from both professional and academic
4. Identification of date/time for exchange activities/interactions
5. Perform exchange activities/interactions
6. Evaluate both professionals and academics experience

1. Programme Overview: Delivery

The programme contains 1 working day or 6-8 hours of exchange activities/interactions between academics and SME professionals to improve understanding and relationships for further collaboration and innovation.

Delivery involves:

- SME professional recruitment (suggested to identify SMEs in the project Training Programme interested in building collaboration with HEIs)
- Academic recruitment (suggested to identify academics interested in industry collaboration or innovation)
- 1 working or 6-8 hours can be spread out over six months.
- Several SME professionals and academics can be exchanged.
- Prepare a plan of most relevant activities/interactions and contacts for each professional and academic to maximise time and opportunity.
- Complete exchange activities/interactions.
- Evaluation of the Programme.

1. Programme Overview: Recruiting Participants

MAIN TARGET GROUP: ENGINEERING SMES

The **main target group** of the Change of Perspective programme are established engineering SMEs with 50-250 staff, 10-50 MEUR turnover looking to increase collaboration with HEIs.

SMEs do not have to be the same as those partaking in the SME Cluster Growth research or Training programme.

"Engineering SME: An SME providing engineering services and products within all industries. For use in this project, partners have decided to take a broad understanding of engineering, being from all sectors."

MAIN TARGET GROUP: ACADEMICS

The **main target group** of the Change of Perspective programme are academics interested in collaborating with SMEs.

Academics do not have to be involved in engineering, they can be involved in marketing, business, ICT etc. and do not have to be involved in the SME Cluster Growth project.

USEFUL CONSIDERATIONS WHEN RECRUITING FOR THE PROGRAMME

- It is suggested to use SMEs interested in further university-business collaboration.
- All participants need to be matched by area of interest and potential for further university-business collaboration to maximise time and opportunity.
- What SMEs are you (in the University) interested in developing a long-term partnership with? Use the programme to generate more university-business collaboration.
- Ensure academics understand the importance of building relationships and trust with industry for university-business collaboration.



1. Programme Overview: Template for promotion - modify accordingly

SME Cluster Growth Change of Perspective Programme: Supporting SMEs in the engineering sector to innovate and grow

Join a unique Change of Perspective programme

- Access current knowledge and expertise to help your SME grow.
- Understand how higher education institutions operate.
- Learn how your business can engage more with a university to grow and innovate.
- Increase your contacts within education, research and support services within a university.
- Network, collaborate and learn with future skilled employees and higher education institutions.

What will you gain?

The programme provides you with a practical experience of how a high education institution operates and how you can engage more for the benefit of your SME:

- Communicate with the next generation of experts
- Understand what a higher education institution can do for your SME
- Learn how a higher education institution operates
- Build your brand and influence within your future local skilled workforce
- Build your brand and influence within your local higher education institution

What? A change of perspective programme to help build understanding and relationships between SMEs and HEIs.

For whom? SMEs working day in the engineering sector

Duration? (6-8 hours that can be spread out).

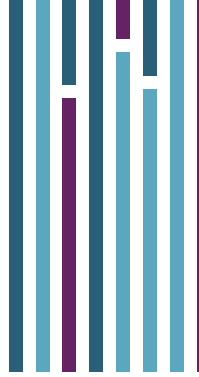
Location? [your location]

Language? In your national language.

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2. HEI RESOURCES - Content



Introduction

Change of Perspective

Possible Approaches

Planning

Evaluation



2.1 Introduction

University-business collaboration requires a shared understanding, trust and integration of knowledge to develop and garner positive results. This programme asks both SME professionals and academics to 'step out' of their daily perspective and take on the perspective of the other party to deepen their understanding of the others' experience, challenges and opportunities. Increasing understanding and empathy for the other party within UBC can lead to stronger relationships and improved collaboration and innovation.

University-Business Collaboration

"Collaboration between universities and industries is seen as essential to innovation systems, with a number of researchers pointing to the impact of such collaboration on both the company's ability to innovate and the generation of economic value within the country and the region" (Sheridan and Fallon, 2016, pp. 16). Albats et al. (2020) argue that the foremost attribute of a business's strategy in the shaping of their innovation performance is the creation of strategic partnerships, in particular university partnerships. The research emphasises that to establish a shared understanding, communication frequency is paramount (Hong et al., 2010; Lee, 2011). Close personal relationships also enable crucial links between universities and business (Barnes et al., 2002; Collier et al., 2011). Guan et al. (2005) consider the absence of communication channels as the primary barrier in partnerships. Hence the importance of such programmes as this; to engage both parties in real-world exchange of experiences to increase understanding, trust and knowledge of shared opportunities.

Perspective-Taking

Perspective-taking is a multidimensional ability that involves understanding another person's visual assessment of reality (viewpoint) and their perceptual assessment (understanding). Multiple perspectives are crucial to gaining a full understanding of a concept, experience, or environment. Perspective-taking is a process of motivated, situational cognition (Barsalou, 2006) that facilitates specific social bonds among all sorts of people, whether they possess specialised knowledge or not (Galinsky et al., 2005). Research illustrates how perspective-taking leads to (amongst other benefits) improved knowledge integration and affective perspective-taking has been shown to be associated with behaviours that extend collaboration across perspectives (Parker and Axtell, 2001).

Considerations

Many of the Change of Perspective activities/interactions are occurring locally already with other businesses so processes and procedures will be in place, however, the following are potential challenges or areas of consideration:

- Protection of IP
- Health and Safety
- Security
- Confidentiality
- HR/Pay or Pension implications

2.2 Change of Perspective

There is no way to perfectly take the perspective of another individual. However, the conscious attempt to understand another's point of view can build new neural pathways, create real learning, and reshape interactions and relationships. That's why practising is vital and the four steps outlined below can help sharpen your skills.

1. Seek Understanding

The first step of perspective-taking involves setting aside your own personal goals to engage with the other person's lived experience and perception.

2. Ideate

The next step involves setting aside your perceptions and thoughts to imagine how the person might be thinking about a situation. These are of course assumptions but they're as close as you can get. Do this until you build a hypothesis.

3. Hypothesise

Now that you have some ideas, narrow down your thoughts into a solid hypothesis you can test and use to connect in your interaction with the other person. If your hypothesis is correct, what outcomes would you expect? If you are wrong, how might you know?

4. Observe and Adjust

Hold your hypothesis lightly and be ready for new information about the other person. Now, you are ready to engage with them, observe, and adjust your assumptions. You have an open discussion. You are curious and ready for insights.

Are you able to connect and collaborate with them? If yes, success!

If not, it's time to go deeper and further challenge your assumptions. Whatever the outcome, the process of perspective-taking isn't over. It's a constant cycle of empathy, imagination, estimation, and discovery.

[Practical Exercises to Develop Perspective-Taking Skills](#)

2.3 Possible Approaches

The Change of Perspective programme requires academics and business professionals exchange workplaces for a working day (6-8 hours x 2). This can be facilitated locally with as many academics, professionals and activities/interactions as required to complete the 12-16 hours exchange of perspective activities/interactions. These activities should facilitate relationship building and thoughtful and practical sharing of expertise and information which facilitates the further innovative collaboration of the SME(s) and HEI.

Below are suggested activities/interactions but each HEI can adjust this list according to their current activities/interactions and what is possible. The main point of the programme is to promote activities with a deeply exchange of perspective and experience.

Activity/Interaction
Industry site visit
Roundtable meeting or workshop with industry experts
Guest Lecture / Seminar
Partake in existing programme/competition
Explore staff education/training
Explore research opportunities
Explore funding opportunities
Explore/view possible shared resources or facilities
Visit relevant research groups
Explore design/production facilities/processes

2.4 Planning - Academics

	Details to be filled in during recruitment			
Name of academic				
Academics' area of interest within SME				
How many hours would you like to exchange?	1-2		4-5	
	2-3		5-6	
	3-4		6+	
Possible activities/interactions of benefit to academic	Industry site visit		Explore research opportunities	
	Roundtable meeting or workshop with industry experts		Explore staff development and training opportunities	
	Guest Lecture / Seminar		Explore design/production facilities/processes	
	Explore funding opportunities			
Possible areas of collaboration for HEI within SME				
What would you like to achieve from your involvement?				
Preferred date/time of activity/interaction				
Name of contacts within SME				

2.5 Evaluation - Academics

Please, fill in this form to evaluate the **Change of Perspective Programme**.

It will take **less than 5 minutes** to complete it and it will support our group to improve the Programme, thank you!

E-mail: _____

Are you doing: () Bachelor () Master () PhD () Researcher Fellow

In which field? _____

University: _____

Country: _____

Which type(s) of activity(ies) you participated:

() a. Explore Research Opportunities

() b. Hackathon

() c. Lecture

() d. Business Development

() e. Industry Site Visit

() f. Workshop with Industry Expert

() g. Explore Funding Opportunities

() h. Other – Specify: _____

2.5 Evaluation - Academics

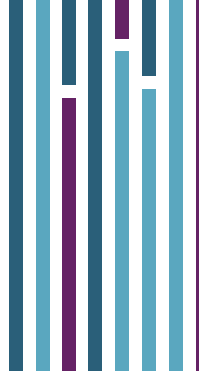
Please indicate in which extent you agree with the following statements from 1 to 5 (*1 being strongly disagree* and *5 being Strongly Agree*) :

	1	2	3	4	5
The programm goals were fullfiled.					
You had easy access to the company.					
The company provided the information requested.					
The engagement on this activity provided you important information/skills to develop your academic career path.					
The development of joint projects with companies is important to support research development.					

Please indicate your evaluation to the aspects below from 1 to 5 (*1 being poor* and *5 Excellent*) :

	1	2	3	4	5
Information Provided.					
Planning					
Relevance to your role					
Benefits from exchange activity/interaction					
Change your perspective towards industry					
Learning from exchange activity/interaction					

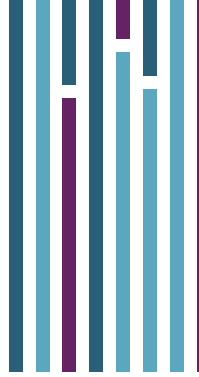
2.5 Evaluation - Academics



Do you have any additional topics that you would like to add to this evaluation form? Feel free to write about your perceptions and issues.

THANK YOU!

3. SME RESOURCES - Content



Introduction
Change of Perspective
Possible Approaches
Planning
Evaluation



3.1 Introduction

This toolkit was prepared as part of SME Cluster Growth (<https://smeclustergrowth.eu/>), an ERASMUS+ Knowledge Alliance project that empowers SMEs in the engineering sector to grow and compete.

Spanning nine partners across seven European countries, SME Cluster Growth is an ambitious collaboration with higher education institutions (HEIs), future skills and business growth professionals and university-industry relationship experts to advance engineering SMEs' capacities.

As identified by an investigation (<https://smeclustergrowth.eu/download/1176/>) undertaken by the project in 2021, small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) form the backbone of the European economy. Improving their competitiveness has been a main objective of European cohesion, R&D, Industrial and ICT policies, among others. SMEs remain a dominant employer contracting around 94 million people and generating around 56.4% of the total added value (€4.4 trillion). However, SMEs face obstacles to growth, including a shortage of skilled staff and limited access to information amongst others.

The Change of Perspective Programme seeks to build understanding and relationships amongst academics and SMEs to further collaborate, innovate and grow.



3.2 Change of Perspective

Academia is a very different environment than industry but there are many people, resources and services within it which can help your business grow and innovate. University-business collaboration requires a shared understanding, trust and integration of knowledge to get positive results. This programme asks both SME professionals and academics to 'step out' of their daily perspective and take on the perspective of the other party to deepen their understanding of the others' experiences, challenges and opportunities.

Increasing understanding and knowledge of how a university and its academics operate can provide an SME with an added advantage of benefiting from the many resources, expertise and services available to it from the university.

Perspective-Taking

In business and in life, many interactions benefit from perspective-taking, or the ability to put yourself in someone else's shoes. Many frameworks and tools for solving tough and complex problems and building partnerships are centred around the ability to take the perspective of others.

There are multiple steps involved in strengthening perspective-taking skills:

1. Recognise that others can have different thoughts, feelings, and knowledge than you.
2. Understand that someone's immediate circumstances, past experiences, beliefs, and culture can influence their perceptions and feelings. There is often a reason behind someone's actions that we cannot see immediately.
3. Relate to another person's perspective by thinking about their unique circumstances, experiences, beliefs and culture to see the world through their eyes. Try to find commonalities with your past experiences to relate to their experience and feelings, even if they are different from what you would feel yourself in that exact situation.

Practical Exercises to Develop Perspective-Taking Skills

“
Life is about perspective and how you look at something... ultimately, you have to zoom out.
”
- Whitney Wolfe Herd

3.3 Possible Approaches

The Change of Perspective programme requires academics and business professionals to exchange workplaces for a working day (6-8 hours). This can be facilitated with as many hours or activities/interactions as is useful/effective for you.

Below are suggested activities/interactions which may be of benefit to your SME and/or you personally. Please collaborate with your university contact to adjust the activities/interactions to maximise your time and benefits.

Activity/Interaction
University site visit
Roundtable meeting or workshop with university experts
Guest Lecture / Seminar
Partake in existing programme/competition
Explore staff education/training
Explore research/innovation facilities and expertise
Explore research opportunities
Explore funding opportunities
Explore/view possible shared resources or facilities
Explore graduate placements and student projects

3.4 Planning - SMEs

	Details to be filled in during recruitment			
Name of SME				
Professionals name				
Professionals' area of interest within HEI				
Possible relevant Department/Offices				
How many hours would you like to exchange?	1-2		4-5	
	2-3		5-6	
	3-4		6+	
Possible activities/interactions of benefit to professional	University site visit		Discuss research opportunities	
	Meeting with university experts		Discuss funding opportunities	
	Guest Lecture		Discuss/view possible shared resources	
	Partake in existing programme/competition		Discuss staff education/training	
	Explore research groups or laboratories		Discuss student placements or graduate recruitment	
What would you like to achieve from your involvement?				
Preferred date/time of activity/interaction				
Name of contacts within Departments/Offices of HEI				

3.5 Evaluation – SMEs

Change of Perspective Programme Evaluation

To be completed by the SME professional after the exchange of activities/interactions

Professional name:

Please complete the questionnaire below regarding your experience with this programme.

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
Information provided				
Planning for the exchange activity/interaction				
Relevance to your role/business				
Relevance to your SMEs' growth				
Benefits from exchange activity/interaction				
Changed your future collaboration with the university				
Changed your perspective towards the university				
Learning from exchange activity/interaction				

Comments regarding the Change of Perspective Programme (achieving objectives, lessons learned, benefits etc):

Thank you for your time.

3.5 Evaluation – SMEs

Please, fill in this form to evaluate the **Change of Perspective Programme**.

It will take **less than 5 minutes** to complete it and it will support our group to improve the Programme, thank you!

E-mail: _____

Name of the Company:

Sector: _____

Country: _____

Which type(s) of activity(ies) you participated:

- a. Explore Research Opportunities
- b. Hackathon
- c. Lecture
- d. Business Development
- e. University Site Visit
- f. Workshop with a Professor/Researcher
- g. Explore Funding Opportunities
- h. Other – Specify: _____

3.5 Evaluation – SMEs

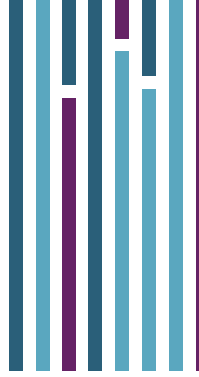
Please indicate in which extent you agree with the following statements from 1 to 5 (*1 being strongly disagree* and *5 being Strongly Agree*) :

	1	2	3	4	5
The programm goals were fullfiled.					
You had easy access to the academics.					
The university provided the information requested.					
The engagement on this activity provided you important information to develop your business.					
The development of joint projects with universities is important to support business' development.					

Please indicate your evaluation to the aspects below from 1 to 5 (*1 being poor* and *5 Excellent*) :

	1	2	3	4	5
Information Provided.					
Planning for exchange activity/interaction					
Relevance to your business					
Relevance to SME's Growth					
Benefits from exchange activity/interaction					
Changed your future collaboration with the university					
Changed your perspective towards the university					
Learning from exchange activity/interaction					

3.5 Evaluation – SMEs



Do you have any additional topics that you would like to add to this evaluation form? Feel free to write about your perceptions and issues.

THANK YOU!

4. Benefits and Results

Overview and Evaluation of Past Projects



4. Benefits and Results

The University-SME Change of Perspective Program aimed to provide a better understanding between business professionals and academics. The purpose was to provide an academic experience to business professionals and a business experience to academics.

As highlighted previously, the University-SME Change of Perspective Programme contains 1 working day or 6-8 hours of exchange activities/interactions between academics and SME professionals to improve understanding and relationships for further collaboration and innovation. This collaboration can be done on different ways: through site visiting, round tables, joint research, and others.

During our Pilot Experience, we observed different activities performed by the institutions in order to explore the numerous possibilities and results that this programme can achieve. The table below details the activities developed.

Activities
Site Visits
Live Case Study
Explore Research Opportunities
University-Business Collaboration

Considering that this programme is flexible regarding its length, minimum 8 hours, each HEI adapted the duration of the programme according to the activity and goals proposed. These Pilot experiences were implemented involving more than 95 academics from several disciplines and 46 companies.

These Pilot experiences showed the importance of creating new opportunities of interaction between companies and universities to foster the innovation process. An important learning from these programmes is that the relationship between these two entities needs to be boosted by the generation of new opportunities of collaboration and exchange of experience between them.

Academic's feedback

These Pilot experiences were appreciated by the academic's representatives. Most part of them highlighted the importance of the program to support the research activity and explore new

possibilities of joint projects.

The participation of academic participants in the program has had a significant impact on their research endeavors. Engaging in these activities has allowed them to gain practical insights into the workings of SMEs, which has enriched their research by providing real-world context and data. This firsthand experience has led to more informed and relevant research outcomes, ultimately contributing to the academic participants' understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by SMEs.

Furthermore, these activities have played a crucial role in strengthening the relationships between academic participants and SMEs. By working closely with SME representatives, the academic participants have built trust and rapport, fostering a sense of collaboration and partnership. This enhanced relationship has not only enriched their research but has also opened doors for potential future collaborations. Academic participants now have an expanded network within the SME community, enabling them to access valuable resources and expertise.

In terms of future projects, many academic participants have expressed their intent to develop collaborative projects with the SME(s) they have interacted with during these activities. The firsthand knowledge gained during the exchanges has provided them with unique insights into the specific needs and challenges faced by these SMEs. As a result, they see potential opportunities to work together on research projects, initiatives, or consultancy services that can address these challenges and create mutual benefits.

Below we detail the feedback from the three main pillars of the program:

- Support to academia's role
- Support to start new joint projects
- Program Structure and particularities

02. University-SME Change of Perspective Programme

Academia's Feedback

Support to academia's role

Since academics typically focus on theoretical research and education, by adopting the perspective of an SME CEO, they gained a better understanding of the practical applications of their work. This insight may lead them to more relevant research topics and improved teaching methods.

The change of perspective programme has enabled academics to incorporate real-world business cases into their curricula and research since SME CEOs are inherently entrepreneurial and face risks and uncertainties regularly. This approach increases the practical relevance of academic work.

“Working with industry partners on authentic assessments has been very beneficial for my own professional learning and development. This has been enriched through networking with industry and collaboration with students, colleagues, and external bodies”.

“Participation in this type of project enhances knowledge of the business world and allows you to meet professionals in the sector, facilitating networking”.

“The knowledge acquired helps in the design of better training programs to improve the employability and entrepreneurship of university students, as well as the continuous training of researchers and teachers”.

“A possible improvement contemplated is the possibility that academics who participate in these initiatives may have their teaching load reduced”.

“Participating in the Program was mind-expanding. It taught us to approach problems differently and embrace creativity”.

“Working in teams during the Program was an eye-opener. Collaborating with people from diverse backgrounds and experiences helped us view challenges from multiple angles”.

“The Program emphasized the understanding of users' needs deeply. It changed our perspective, highlighting empathy and fostering the creation of solutions tailored to real human problems”.

“The program prepared us with practical tools and methodologies that we believe will be vital in attempting real-world challenges in our careers”.

Support to explore new joint projects

The academics who visited the SME facilities generally pointed out that the activity was a very good vehicle for seeking innovative ways to boost the growth of the research group and adapt to changing environments in terms of the knowledge transfer that society demands.

Regarding networking and collaboration, the host company CEO stands out for his extensive cooperation with industrial partners. Dr. Sicilia plans to leverage this perspective to establish partnerships with companies to enhance research opportunities and increase funding for academic projects.

“External advice from institutions and SMEs is essential for the development and success of the projects”.

Program Structure and Particularities

Each partner developed different activities to promote the SME-University Change of Perspective. Below we detail the feedback for each type of activity.

Site visit

“Regarding the structure of the activity, overall, it has been satisfactory. The exchange program, which involves swapping workplaces between business representatives and university academics, has proven to be effective in facilitating mutual understanding and trust-building”.

“The academic party experienced an industry-university collaboration framework in the context of addressing a real problem through research and development efforts for its resolution. Together with the SME they decided for a joint research project for funding. Both the SME and the academic were quite satisfied with this exchange”.

“The main benefit was better communication”.

Live Case Study

“There is no better way to learn about industry than by working on authentic assessment. Mentoring and providing ongoing constructive feedback to students is important so that they can improve their proposals for industry partners”.

02. University-SME Change of Perspective Programme

Academia's Feedback

“The classroom experience is also greatly enhanced as students become more engaged and more actively involved in their own learning”.

“Collaborating with industry partners on live case assessments does require more time than traditional assessments”.

“Forward planning is vital. I usually commence planning at least one semester in advance.”

University-Business Collaboration

“The presentation of results between different projects enriches their evolution, ideas are gathered, and synergies are created”.

“The development of collaborative projects with SMEs makes it possible to participate in other events outside the university, which in turn allows access to differential knowledge and a greater variety of resources”.

“In this case, participation in joint projects is the gateway to the ecosystem, which enhances the connection with the business network”.

“Horizontal work among all participants is very important for its success, based on the co-creation of value”.

“This collaboration also enhances the generation of alliances with political institutions and different organizations of great value for the advancement of research, teaching and knowledge transfer”.

“It is very positive for the generation of reference models. The success in the realization of these projects enhances the involvement of other academics and SMEs in the University-Business collaboration”.

SME's feedback

These Pilot experiences were also valued by the SME's representatives. The Programme has contributed to the professional development of participating SMEs. By facilitating exchanges between academia and industry, the program has offered SME representatives a unique opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of academic research methodologies and concepts. This exposure has enriched their knowledge base, enabling them to make more informed decisions within their

organizations.

Furthermore, the activities have proven to be instrumental in strengthening the relationship between SMEs and the university. The direct interaction between academic participants and SME representatives has cultivated a sense of collaboration and trust. This improved rapport has not only enhanced the partnership between the two parties but has also led to the development of mutual respect and understanding. As a result, both academia and SMEs are better positioned to work together on joint initiatives and projects.

Below we detail the feedback from the two of the main pillars of the program:

- Support to SME's development
- Program Structure and particularities

Support to SME's development

Many participants, both from academia and SMEs, have expressed their intent to pursue collaborative projects in the future. These initial encounters have sparked interest in joint research endeavors, knowledge sharing initiatives, and innovation projects. This aligns perfectly with the program's overarching goal of fostering partnerships and knowledge transfer between academia and industry.

“Collaboration with academia has allowed them to access expertise and experience that might otherwise be unavailable or costly to acquire. It would benefit them in the future to solve complex problems and innovate more effectively”.

“The comments and suggestions made by the academics on the project portfolio have provided fresh ideas and research-based knowledge that can drive innovation within the company, which can give his SME a competitive edge in the industry”.

“One of the most important assets for external companies and institutions that collaborate with the university is human capital. Through collaboration with the university SMEs have access to talent, academics and above all students”.

“Collaborating with professors broadens the SME's professional network and opens doors to new funding sources in public R&D&I calls”.

02. University-SME Change of Perspective Programme

SME's Feedback

Program Structure and Particularities

As already highlighted before, each partner implemented the programme using different strategies and activities. Below, we detail the feedback for each type of activity.

Site visit

“According to the company's general manager, the collaborative work with the university led to finding solutions to their problems in a shorter time than they had anticipated, bringing about a positive change in their approach”.

“Collaborating with the academic world has also been very useful to have a pool of talent since computer engineers specialized in artificial intelligence are currently in great demand in our country”.

“The company has also suggested that sharing sensitive business information with academics can raise intellectual property and confidentiality issues, so signing agreements before the hearings should be signed”.

“He also suggested that as CEO, he is primarily focused on profitability and business growth, which may give rise to conflicts of interest with academia and, therefore would be prior issues to be addressed that could have been included in the agenda of activities that took place in the visit to the university to discuss with the office of transfer of research results or legal advisors of the University”.

Live Case Study

“It brought new innovative ideas to the company while learning from students who have their finger on the pulse in terms of trends, digital and what is happening among younger audiences who the company were trying to attract. The programme gave me greater insight into the importance of education and partnerships among academia and industry which is an area I have now gotten involved in further.”

“This course and programme would give great insight to any company on new emerging talent. It provides a great learning experience for students to be part of strategic thinking in relation to marketing and business and hopefully will give many students a project to showcase and be proud of in their own individual careers.”

University-Business Collaboration

As an SME, University-Industry collaboration is not always easy to develop, the input mechanisms and the internal processes of the university are not known.

This collaboration usually starts with a personal contact. It is very positive if the university itself designs mechanisms to favor exchange spaces in different disciplines.

Collaboration with the university is usually enhanced by personal profiles that have knowledge of both worlds (boundary spanners). For this reason, the University must not only promote a favorable context for the exchange of ideas, experiences and knowledge between university - company, but also detect the profiles that are in this intersection, empower them and provide them with resources so that they can lead these collaborative initiatives.

For a successful collaboration with the university it is important that there is the possibility to realise not only one-off exchanges, but also real collaborative projects in the medium and long term. In other words, that these exchanges have continuity over time, allowing them to grow and improve.

Students can bring innovative viewpoints to collaborative projects and, beyond that, also to the company. Many of the students who participate in these projects are subsequently hired by the companies. Thus, the university acts as a generator of qualified human capital for companies and facilitates the employability of its students.

In terms of the main resources obtained from the collaboration, in addition to the exchange of human capital, greater access to resources and knowledge is highlighted. Collaboration with the university favours innovation in the company and facilitates the introduction of new technologies and ways of working.

According to the company, the Program was an exciting experience and professional growth for their employees. They stressed that the team was able to express innovative and highly useful ideas for their company. They experienced for the first time how multidisciplinary is able to add value, generating ideas that usually do not happen in the company or even in their sector.

02. University-SME Change of Perspective Programme SME's Feedback

To the company, during the period of joint work, their team contacted and discussed various topics involving figures from different offices, arousing interest in the challenge and direct commitment from colleagues.

In particular, they highlighted that the academics were full of determination and enthusiasm. They spread a positive climate of energy and a desire to rethink processes and projects throughout the organization.

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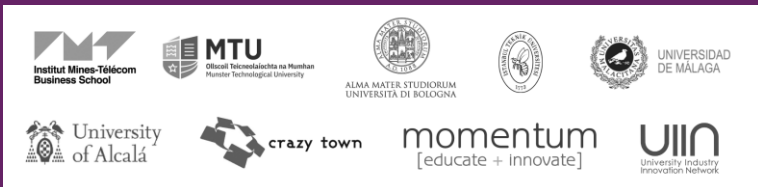
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