

INNOVATION CULTURE FOR SMEs

## **InC Development Program Intermediary Organisation Guide**

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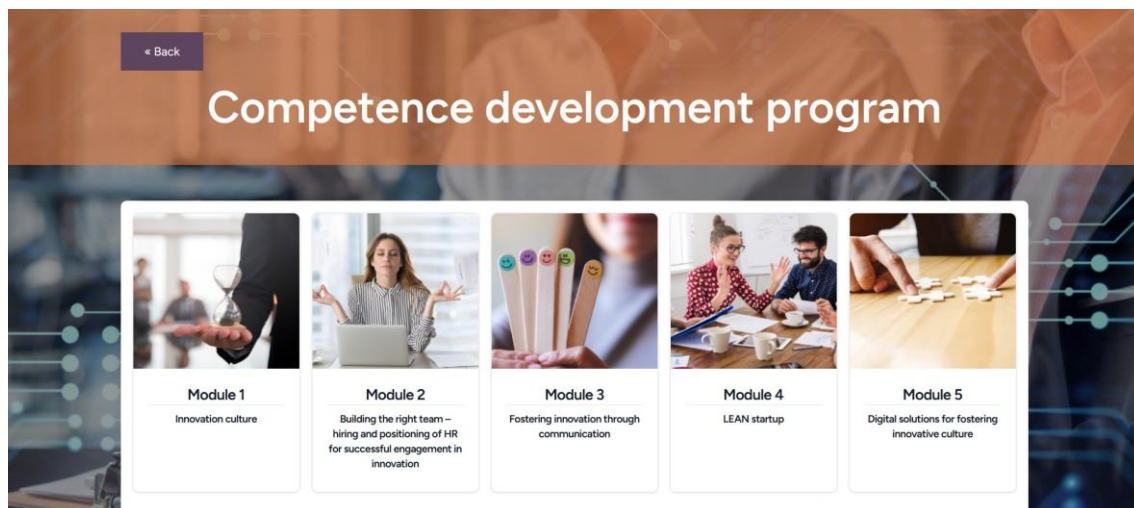
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## INC COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

The InC Competence development program directly addresses the need for developing competencies of SMEs managers to effectively build innovation culture in their SMEs and establish them in a way that will realistically contribute to competitiveness and sustainability, by building efficient integration of tangible and intangible innovation assets and proper stimulation of intangible assets toward innovation (Arswan et al. 2020). InC Competence Development Program takes, after implementation within an online environment, a final form of computer-mediated program preparing participants to address the key elements of establishing innovation culture in SME. It covers 5 thematic areas:

1. Designing and leading innovation environment,
2. Building the right team – hiring and positioning of HR for successful engagement in innovation,
3. Fostering innovation through communication,
4. Lean start-up,
5. Digital solutions for fostering innovative culture.



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Along those lines the program focuses on key and practical aspects with applicability in the scope of SMEs activities and capacitating participants to create innovation culture and implement it in their organisations. It takes a form of practical modular tutorial (5 modules) introducing innovation culture concept, their elements requiring attention and different approaches, pros and cons, focusing on taking users through practical interactive exercises, scenarios for implementation and cases of applications within no/low-tech SMEs.

## **OBJECTIVE OF THE METHODOLOGY**

The main objective of this document is present the approach to development of the InC Development Program that aims at responding to the realistic needs of the target group – executives and management staff from SMEs following the current state of the art in the innovation and innovation culture related areas. It looks to clearly present objectives of all the program, as well as learning objectives of each of the thematic areas covered by the program. Further, the methodology aims to provide insides in the work on the development of the InC Program to help future adopters to effectively use the solution for capitalising SMEs managers to face challenges of fostering effective innovation culture in their organisations, as well as be better prepared to adjust it to their real needs.

## **TARGET GROUP AND THEIR NEEDS**

The training methodology aims specifically to respond to the needs of **SMEs** for better understanding of the opportunities resulting from engaging in innovation, and relevance of building innovation culture to effectively engage and benefit from it. It looks to ensure that the program focuses on strategic requirements of doing so, and realistically supports development of specific competences for fostering innovation culture within The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein

European SMEs. In this way the methodology is looking to contribute to the impact of InC project through allowing SMEs to become active beneficiary of innovation in an intentional and effective way, through embracing innovation culture. To this end, the InC Development Program is designed considering specific needs of SMEs managers and challenges of establishing innovation culture in non-technological and low-tech SMEs. It specifically addresses the needs of executives and senior management staff from SMEs and managers or future managers that aspire to lead innovative SMEs.

The project needs analysis shown that the target group struggles to identify educational resources in innovation area that would provide quality upskilling path adapted to their needs, especially regarding the current level of innovation competences, as well as the time and resources limitations. Currently, majority of available resources in this area are academic publications that are commonly ignored by SMEs due to perceived barriers related with gap in language (specific academic writing conventions requiring high capacity for sense making and translation into practical applications), gap in understanding and the limited practicality of existing solutions. Moreover, SMEs, especially those in the traditional industries, face relevant barriers related with misconceptions of innovation at large - for example its limited association with hi-tech, automation and digitalisation, as well as with finding it as a key domain of large enterprises. That poses a major challenge for building competences for innovation, at large, and even further for fostering innovation culture among traditional SMEs. In response, following recognition of innovation culture as a key pillar to successfully implement and exploit innovation in SMEs, the InC project offers the open training delivered via e-learning platform to provide easy on-demand access to training relevant for developing innovation culture within SME to be freely available to SMEs free of charge, anytime, anywhere.

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InC Development Program aims to offer practically oriented and time-efficient learning targeting, in the first place at the needs of executives and senior management staff from no/low-tech SMEs sectors. Beyond SME as a target group, the partnership strongly encourages engagement of SMEs support organisations, VET providers, as well as other actors interested in building SMEs competences to engage in innovation and embrace innovation culture in a broadly understood SME environment, e.g., research centres, science and technology parks, governmental bodies engaged in the dissemination and exploitation of the project results to ensure improvement of training opportunities in the area of innovation for the target group and popularisation of the needs-oriented approach.

Considering the project objectives and target group(s) needs the training will be based on 3 main pillars:

- Learner-orientation,
- Accessibility, and
- Transferability.

As such, the training will focus on:

i/ SMEs orientation, specifically

- 1) Responsiveness - by targeting the most relevant current for SMEs effective engagement in innovation and fostering innovation culture issues and knowledge gaps and providing learning opportunities adjusted to the SMEs limitations - time and resources; providing on demand learning tools, with no geographic limitations, customisable learning paths and open access;
- 2) Integration - by developing the training program responsive to the needs of SMEs as a part of a broader InC solution complemented by specific tools for SMEs support organisations to capacitate them regarding supporting SMEs in building innovation culture in their organisations;

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3) Practical focus – by providing compacted evidence-based knowledge pills focused on real life challenges and opportunities from the SME innovation and innovation culture perspective; together with practical examples focused within SMEs non/low tech sectors and interactive tools (exercises, decision maps, local cases, case studies, info-graphics and other audio-visual material).

ii/ user orientation, specifically

- 1) Customised online training - Modular design allowing customisation of the training path to particular needs of a participant depending on his/her specific knowledge base, scope of engagement in innovation activities and specific needs of his/her SME.
- 2) Interactive approach – Strong pressure on interactive practical learning focus stimulating active engagement of the learners based on interactive exercises, local cases, application examples, check lists, infographics, thinking questions and other learning-enhancing tools.

iii/ high accessibility

- 1) Integrated solution adapted to the needs of users with low level of innovation competences by application of easy-to-understand simple messaging and practical methodologies – practical focus, interactive approach and asynchronous learning approach to provide self-paced learning allowing flexibility.
- 2) High accessibility and dissemination among SMEs support organisations, VET organisations and other relevant actors for broad impact and sustainability.

iv/ transferability

- 1) Integration in the training of local and international perspective.
- 2) Integration of the training and toolset within a virtual environment.
- 3) Definition of transparent, easy to transfer within the VET sector methodology for development of competences relevant for fostering innovation in SMEs.

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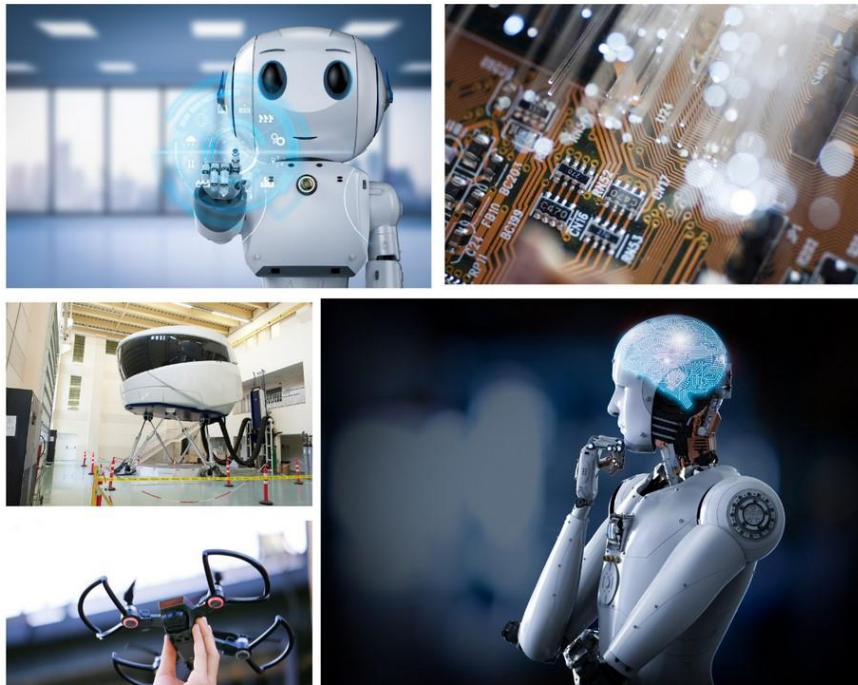
## TRAINING OBJECTIVES, TOPICS AND KEY ASSUMPTIONS

The key objective of the InC Development Program is to increase competency of SMEs managers to successfully face challenges of developing innovation culture in their SMEs. The objective has been approached by the InC Partnership in line with 5 thematic areas identified at the stage of needs analysis as key for filling in the gaps in SMEs managers' readiness in this scope: 1. Designing and leading innovation environment; 2. Building the right team – hiring and positioning of HR for successful engagement in innovation; 3. Fostering innovation through communication; 4. Lean start-up; 5. Digital solutions for fostering innovative culture.

SMEs managers will be trained regarding each area within a dedicated module, with its specific objectives:

### Module 1. Designing and leading innovation environment (E&D)

What comes to your mind when you hear the word 'INNOVATION'??



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The module main objective is to develop understanding of SMEs leaders what innovation culture is, how does it contribute to competitiveness of an SME and what are the main requirements for establishing an innovation culture.

It helps the learner understand:

- How innovation environment in SMEs looks like and how SMEs may benefit from it in practical terms,
- How fostering innovation culture looks like in practice (with examples from SMEs in the sectors addressed) and how it differs from traditional performance-oriented culture,
- What are the main requirements for a leader to establish innovation culture,
- How to recognise whether a company has a healthy innovation culture,
- What are the best practices regarding innovation culture in SMEs and what are the mistakes that managers should avoid.

## **Module 2. Building the right team – hiring and positioning of HR for successful engagement in innovation, (InnoHub).**



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This module aims to provide SMEs leaders with knowledge about implementing a pro innovative human resources in SMEs, especially in those with low innovation, in order to improve the team and achieve the company's objectives. In this module we will understand what innovation is, what innovative teams are and what you can do as an SME manager to create and maintain a loyal and motivated innovation team.

This module aims to help learner understand:

- Why people management is important in SMEs.
- The functions of the human resources team.
- The recruitment process in SMEs.
- How to keep your team engaged and involved in a small business.
- What innovation is and how you can become an innovative business.
- What is an innovation team, what are their characteristics and how they can drive an SME forward.

### Module 3. Fostering innovation through communication, (ADES)



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This module will help SME managers to use effective communication skills and techniques in the innovation process within their companies. They will find out why is communication crucial to fostering an innovative culture, as well as some ways to enhance innovation through communication.

It covers:

- why is it said that communication is the vital component of the innovation process;
- what are some important features of an effective two-way communication;
- why and how to communicate to your employees about innovation;
- some of the communication strategies you can use in your company to drive innovation among your team;
- how to improve your team communication skills to foster innovation.

#### **Module 4. Lean start-up, (CNIPM Arad)**

The Lean Startup methodology is an approach to launching new products and businesses rapidly through iterative testing and feedback. This module will provide an overview of Lean Startup concepts and how they can be applied by SMEs.

It will help learners:

- Understand the core principles and benefits of Lean Startup
- Learn how to create minimum viable products (MVPs) to validate assumptions
- Master the build-measure-learn feedback loop for continuous improvement
- Know how to gather and utilize customer feedback through validated learning
- Determine when to pivot or persevere based on insights gained
- Apply Lean Startup methodology through tools like the Business Model Canvas

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**Module 5. Digital solutions for fostering innovative culture. (Danmar)**

# Cybersecurity

**How to reduce the risk of cyberattacks? – step by step**

## 01. Install antivirus software

Modern antivirus software, constantly updated, provides over 95% protection against malware.



## 02. Update software

Regular updating of the operating system, application software, including web browsers, messengers and software for receiving and sending e-mail, is very important for cyber hygiene.



## 03. Take care of your privacy

It is worth making sure that you share information about yourself in a reasonable way. you should avoid providing your personal or contact details in places where there is no such need.



The module main objective is to understand among SME leaders the importance of digital solutions in supporting or creating innovative ventures. Learners will understand what tools are needed for collaboration, platforms to help manage innovation and

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digital learning platforms to help support a culture of innovation.

By leveraging these digital solutions, organizations can create a more collaborative, innovative, and agile culture that is better equipped to adapt to change and drive growth.

It will help learners:

- Understand the importance of digital solutions in driving innovation and growth in SMEs.
- Identify different collaboration tools and choose the right one for their organisation's needs.
- Use innovation management platforms to manage and measure the success of innovation initiatives.
- Know the digital learning platforms to foster a culture of innovation and upskilling in their organisation.
- Evaluate the advantages of cloud computing platforms in facilitating innovation and growth within SMEs.
- Recognise the importance of cyber security in protecting valuable data and using cyber security tools to protect against cyber threats.

Following the thematic focus of the modules the development process corresponded to the defined above needs of the target group, with a special attention paid to providing e-course adjusted to the target group (executives and senior management staff from SMEs within no/low tech sectors and managers or future managers that aspire to lead innovation activities in their SMEs) limitations

i/ regarding time and resources, providing on demand practically oriented learning tools, with no geographic limitations, customized learning paths and open access and asynchronous learning approach to provide self-paced learning allowing flexibility and,

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ii/ adjusted to internal diversification of the target group (difference in educational background, field of operations etc.) by application of easy-to-understand simple messaging and practical learner-oriented methodologies.

Within the implementation, the learner-based focus has been especially expressed in:

- delivering contents in a simple language, avoiding jargon, using practical methodologies and broad use of real-life examples and graphical representations easily understandable for general population (to account for broad variety of profiles of SMEs managers and executives)
- no theories will be included, unless required for the user to be able to practically apply the knowledge.

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