

BeyondScale



University of Ruse  
"Angel Kanchev"

Guidelines on Peer-Learning

# University of Ruse "Angel Kanchev"

## GUIDELINE ON PEER-LEARNING OUTBOUND ACTIVITY

### "Angel Kanchev" UNIVERSITY OF RUSE

#### **BeyondScale - Developing the Organisational Capacity of Higher Education Institutions using the HEInnovate platform to facilitate peer-learning and a pan-European community of practice**

##### **Take-aways from Peer-learning experiences**

Peer-learning is a way for partners to learn from each other effectively. At a time when the university resources are limited and demands upon the staff are increasing, it is time for the different stakeholders within the university but also outside of it to learn from each other.

For peer-learning to take place it is important to know who the "peers or buddies" are. For peer-learning to be achieved within the BeyondScale project a buddy system was created. The buddy system included internal HEI partners for the inbound projects, external for the outbound projects, and a system that involved project partners, associate partners as well as mentors. The internal partners were the university management, the heads of departments, the heads of study programs, the heads of service units and selected lecturers. On the other side external partners were public sector/policy-oriented organisations along with enterprise support organizations/incubators/ start-ups, micro firms and industry.

The internal HEI partners in the activities – the project team, administrative, academic, other teaching staff as well as students- benefited from the documentation of the activities of BeyondScale, the capacity building seminars and webinars organized at the higher education institutions. External stakeholders also benefited from the augmented capacity at the higher education institutions which they collaborate with.

While COVID-19 made things more complicated the design of the system allowed all partners to interact on multiple levels and with a variety of partners from the inside and the outside of their network. The result was the co-design and the implementation of inbound and outbound activities.

The following roadmap provides an overview of the peer-learning activities developed during the BeyondScale project. For any further information see [www.beyondscale.eu](http://www.beyondscale.eu) or contact us at: [office@wpz-research.com](mailto:office@wpz-research.com)

The BeyondScale roadmap on peer-learning included the following steps:

1. Think about what contribution you expect or what you want to learn
2. Think about your own contribution and whether your partner can use this contribution
3. Define together the goals of the exchange
4. Agree on the way of communication
5. Define future meetings or possibilities of exchange
6. Reflect on the value of the exchange
7. Think about further joint activities

## An example of a peer-learning activity.

### HEInnovate dimension: Knowledge Exchange & Collaboration

**Description of the activity:** Two workshops were organised by the University of Ruse to analyze how the university could collaborate better with local industry partners in applied research projects in the field of knowledge transfer. In this activity we focused on the HEInnovate dimension of "Knowledge exchange and collaboration". The HEInnovate self-reflection statements provides a good understanding about the key issues to consider when encouraging the responsiveness of the University of Ruse to the needs of business and the outside world in general.

### Our participants represented:

- The manager of a company
- The Head of a Scientific laboratory at the Machine Building faculty
- A Scientist at the Machine Building faculty
- The Rector
- The Vice Rector in Research
- The Director of the Scientific and Research Center
- The Vice Rector in Development Coordination and Continuing Education
- The Head of the Entrepreneurship Center

### Involvement, contributions and future benefits of the partners:

External participants/ Partners	Involved in	Contribution	Future (mutual) benefit
<b>Company Manager in the field of welding technologies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management body the company</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business expertise in production of welding technologies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business-university partnership for scientific research in welding technologies</li> </ul>
<b>Head of the Materials Science and Technology laboratory</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research projects about welding technologies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leading researcher at the University of Ruse about welding technologies</li> <li>• Well-recognized scientist among the Bulgarian companies in the field of welding technologies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• University-business partnership for scientific research in welding technologies</li> </ul>

### Why was peer-learning important for your activity.

- University of Ruse in support of the BeyondScale consortium has developed a good partnership for knowledge transfer and collaboration between a particular businessman and a scientific laboratory/department.
- This experience could be used as a good practice for other possible partnerships by similar academic representatives.

### **What have you learnt during the peer-learning process of your outbound activity?**

- The basic principle applied to the workshop was “By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail”. Therefore, the Ruse Uni team invested many hours in preliminary meetings with the involved stakeholders to discuss opportunities and strengths both at the business and the academic side.
- If there is an already existing good level of trust between the manager and the scientific team, then there are more chances for a successful workshop.
- The involvement of the Rectorate is with critical importance for the long-term collaboration between the firm and the scientific team.
- The discussion around the HEInnovate statements in the dimension “Knowledge exchange and collaboration” confirmed the willingness of the stakeholders to work together and gave a clear structure and fundament to the discussion in the workshop.
- The limited number of workshop participants allowed each of them to play a clear role and have a meaningful contribution.
- The support from the BeyondScale partners was useful in preparations. This support could perhaps be designed as a manual for the preparation of an outbound workshop around the HEInnovate tool and the value proposition canvas. However, every country (even each university) has its specifics. Therefore, this manual should be stated in general terms in order to also be useful for other HEIs.
- The participants of such activities should be limited only to those, who have real interests for success – Manager of the firm; Rector body, scientific team, university administrative units to facilitate the knowledge exchange.

### **Would you recommend the peer-learning buddy system to another HEI and why? What could other HEIs learn from it?**

- The experience of University of Ruse “Angel Kanchev” in outbound activities under BeyondScale could be useful to other HEIs, because it shows how to develop a form of public-private partnership on the base of respect to the mutual interest of both parties.
- The benefits for other HEIs from using this experience could be in three directions: (1) increased expertise of their scientific teams; (2) high-quality publications in proper scientific forums and (3) improved facilities of the involved scientific laboratories.

### **What were the common objectives?**

- To organize seminars for information campaign among firms for knowledge transfer on the base of HEInnovate platform.
- The main objective was to develop the so called external entrepreneurial ecosystem and to improve the university-business collaboration for the commercialization of the applied research.

### What were the outcomes?

- Identified managers in the outbound environment of the University of Ruse who were positive for university-business collaboration.
- These managers have now additional information about the benefit to their firms. They have become aware of these opportunities for knowledge transfer thanks to their fulfilment of the [www.heinnovate.eu](http://www.heinnovate.eu) platform within the BeyondScale project.

### What were the possible barriers and challenges?

- Many professors and researchers and businessmen were sceptical about the HEInnovate tool.
- The participants of the of this workshop did not know the HEInnovate platform as a useful instrument for establishment of direct contracts for knowledge transfer.
- This source of risk could be mitigated by careful explanation of the purpose of the eight dimensions in the [www.heinnovate.eu](http://www.heinnovate.eu)
- The Public-private partnership to be recognized as a form of university-business collaboration.

### What were the possible opportunities?

- The promotion of the financial indicators of the university through commercialization of the research activities

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