



Deliverable 5.5: ACTTiVate follow-up scheme and help desk facility

IESE BUSINESS SCHOOL – UNIVERSITY OF NAVARRA



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Abstract
<p>The present document reports the functioning and performance of the follow-up and help-desk schemes of the ACTTiVate project over the period November 2017-March 2019. The referenced task (Task 5.6 of WP5 on the ACTTiVate follow-up scheme and help desk facility) was meant to make available a service in order to follow-up and support the progress of the ACTTiVate grant recipients. This report has been prepared by WP5 leader (IESE Business School) with the collaboration of all consortium cluster partners concerned.</p>

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1 GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE FOLLOW-UP SCHEME AND HELP DESK FACILITY

Task 5.6 of WP5 (ACTTiVate follow-up scheme and help desk facility) was meant to make available a service in order to follow-up and support the progress of ACTTiVate grant recipients. Within the ACTTiVate project this specific service was basically operationalized as direct facility support centralized at the Project Officer level.

Once the project was under way it was expected that both the type and the degree of liaison between the Project Officers and the selected SMEs was likely to exceed the mere fulfilment of SMEs reaching the goals fixed for them. Rather, ACTTiVate would assume that extended support on many issues to the granted SMEs would be necessary to ensure that: i) the SMEs were capable to go smoothly forward through the project, and ii) they would be able to take advantage of all the opportunities available to them within the project and beyond such as access to the partners’ value networks and/or ecosystems, or even in a broader context. Thus, each cluster partner acted as a “first-stop-service-shop” for the beneficiary SMEs, with the rest of the partners being involved on request to cater for the beneficiary SMEs’ questions or needs when needed. Over the duration of the project the ACTTiVate Help Desk Facility has “de facto” operated through a continuous assistance and regular engagement by Cluster Partners with their portfolios (Table 1). By leveraging on their expertise, processes and value networks, cluster partners have then become the key actors within the ACTTiVate project to manage help-desk activities and other related assistance activities. Table 1 shows the different SME portfolios by ACTTiVate cluster partner.

Table 1. SMEs portfolio per Cluster Partner

Cluster Partner	Cluster Partner	Cluster Partner	Cluster Partner	Cluster Partner	Cluster Partner	Cluster Partner	Cluster Partner
OOST (NL)	AFC (NL)	FT (SPA)	PTS (SPA)	INEGI (POR)	DCU (IRE)	TP (POL)	MAC (SPA)
SME Porffolio	SME Porffolio	SME Porffolio	SME Porffolio	SME Porffolio	SME Porffolio	SME Porffolio	SME Porffolio
ACAS	PHOSPHATE NANOFIL-TRATION	AGRO-ANALIZZA	CLOVER MS	AR-SHM	BRAVE	BUBBLEFOOT	ECHO
BB	VIRIDIAN MODEL	ENSEQ	BIOCOVET AIR	B2S	CAST	COOLPET	FARSIGHTS
CATHETER SLIP-COVER	VITULO PLUS	LEGITEST HEALTH	COOLPATH	BLOC@ST	CTONE	LMP-SENS	GENIO
DLH		OLEO-SENSE	GENEHEALTH	ESCAPE	ECDS	MEZZO-HEALTH	PAMIS
EYESENSE		TEDARCH	MDURANCE	FAST-VET	SMARTPASS	WATCHDOG	PETRA
ELISA			MASTITUBE	FTMD			PURE-OLSPACE
NANOTECHFOR-FOOD			SCANFACE	LANDEVAL			XAIRNET
			SIGUEMED	NET-PATHOLOGY			
		VT-HEALTH	QSTAMP				

1.1 PERFORMANCE AND EVALUATION OF THE FOLLOW-UP SCHEME AND HELP DESK FACILITY

The purpose of this section is to evaluate and report the management and performance of the help desk facility and related activities over the period from October 2017 through March 2019 within the consortium project.

The report is based on data provided by ACTTiVate Cluster Partners (AFC, DCU, FT, INEGI, OOST, PST and TP) by means of a specific qualitative and quantitative survey to evaluate, in terms of the number of managed inquiries / activities, the level of help-desk and assistance activity by each cluster/entity related to the following categorized activities (see Table 2 below).

Table 2. Categories and subcategories of help-desk activity

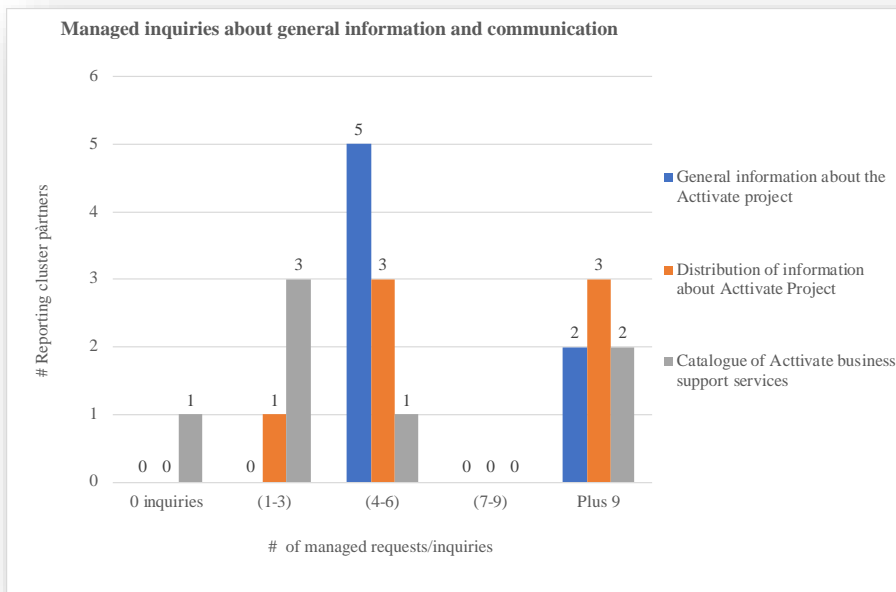
<p><i>i) Management of general inquiries and requests for information/assistance related to the ACTTiVate project and support framework</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General information about the A project • Distribution of information about ACTTiVate Project • Catalogue of ACTTiVate business support services
<p><i>ii) Management of inquiries and requests for information / assistance on all relevant specific activities, training workshops and matchmaking events for the 50 beneficiary SMEs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance on the TechComm Training Program • Assistance on the IR Training Program • Assistance on the B2B/Brokerage/Fundraising events • Assistance on the Mobility and Exchange Program • Assistance on the Mentoring Program • Assistance on other specific events /activities related to ACTTiVate
<p><i>iii) General management of relations with the beneficiary SME portfolios (50 SMEs)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance on the completion of the SMEs' compulsory deliverables related to ACTTiVate • Review of the SMEs' compulsory deliverables related to ACTTiVate • Assistance on the access to other complementary financial sources (public, private...) • Assistance on business development aspects not related to ACTTiVate • Establishment of contacts / cooperation with other ACTTiVate SMEs • Identification of possible technological partners in other countries • Establishment of contacts with R&D institutions, special service providers or other stakeholders beyond the ACTTiVate framework • Information about activities organized by clusters/partners beyond the ACTTiVate framework • Assistance to approach other EU projects and initiatives of interest for them

1.2 PROVIDING GENERAL INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION ABOUT THE ACTTIVATE PROJECT

Most of the reporting cluster partners (8) indicate a high degree of help-desk activity in all the subcategories defined under this category (Figure 1), that is, managing of inquiries from and exchanges with the beneficiary SMEs concerning:

- *General information about the ACTTiVate project:* All cluster partners / units report help-desk and assistance activity under this category. Five of the eight reporting units inform of between 4-6 inquiries from their SME portfolio over the period, and three clusters report more than 9 inquiries under this activity category.
- *Distribution of information about ACTTiVate Project:* All cluster partners / units report assistance / inquiry activity on this category with seven of the eight reporting units giving account of at least 4 inquiries, and four clusters reporting more than 9 inquiries under this activity category.
- *Catalogue of ACTTiVate business support services.* Seven of the eight reporting cluster partners signaled activity under this activity category, of which four inform of at least 4 inquiries over the period, and three reported between 1 and 3 exchanges.

Figure 1.



1.3 PROVIDING ASSISTANCE ON ALL SPECIFIC SUPPORT ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTED FOR THE 50 BENEFICIARY SMES

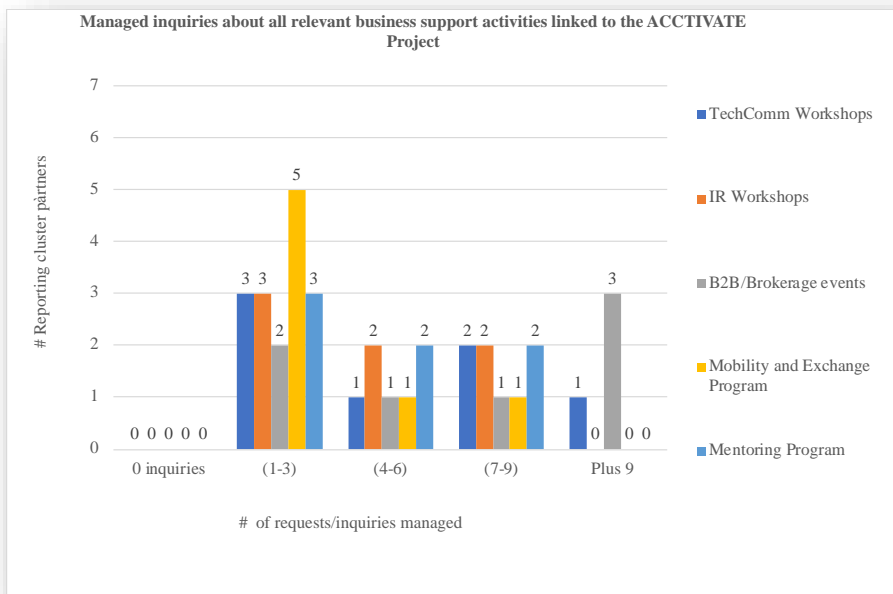
Under this section it is analyzed the level of help-desk activity in terms of managed inquiries and requests for information/assistance about those relevant (national/international) specific activities, training workshops and matchmaking events that have been implemented for the beneficiary SMEs through WP5 over the period of analysis.

This includes the level of activity of managed inquiries and/or requests for information and/or assistance (Figure 2) related to¹:

- *TechComm Training Workshop.* All reporting units show a high degree of help-desk activity concerning this WP5 program (4 workshops and post-workshop coaching implemented for the top-50 beneficiaries). Five of the eight cluster partners report at least 4 exchanges related to this support activity, and three have managed between 1 and 3 inquiries/exchanges about it.
- *Investment Readiness (IR) Training Workshop.* The 50 ACTTiVate awarded projects were entitled to benefit from this WP5 on an optional basis depending on their stage of development and external fundraising objective at the time of the intervention. 29 SMEs finally attended two specific IR workshops and one webinar. This support activity shows a high level of managed inquiries/exchanges by the cluster partners that is equivalent to the previous program with
- *B2B/Brokerage events and fund-matching / fundraising events.* Six of the eight reporting clusters managed at least 4 inquiries/exchanges concerning the implementation of this WP5 program, and four clusters report a level of help-desk activity of more than 5 exchanges related to this program over the period.
- *Mobility and Exchange Program.* For this WP5 program that was put in place for only five selected SMEs among the top-30 ranked, only 3 SMEs finally applied for and were awarded to join the program and receive the extra funding to execute it. The help-desk activity related to this program in overall terms show a medium-to-low range in terms of the managed inquiries and/or exchanges with 5 of the 8 clusters concerned reporting between 1 and 3 exchanges.
- *Mentoring Program.* This WP5 program was implemented for only the top-30 beneficiary projects from ACTTiVate. The reported level of help-desk activity related to this program reveals that five of eight reporting clusters have managed at least 4 inquiries and/exchanges related to this matter with three clusters reporting activity between 1 and 3 exchanges.

¹ The measure of help-desk activity only includes the assistance provided by the reporting cluster partners. The help-desk assistance provided directly to the beneficiary SMEs by the Project Coordinator (IDP) and the service provider (IESE) is not measured for this report.

Figure 2



1.4 MANAGING RELATIONS WITH THE BENEFICIARY SMES PORTFOLIO BEYOND ACCTIVATE SCOPE

Under this section it is analyzed the level of help-desk activity in terms of managed inquiries and requests for information/assistance about a number of requirements, processes and assistance activities that are directly or indirectly related to the ACTTiVate project, and beyond the scope of the general activity categories analyzed in previous sections 3.1 and 3.2. As a result, a number of subcategories of help-desk activities have been defined and measured according to the judgment of the reporting POs (Figure 3).

All cluster partners report a significative degree of help-desk activity related to the assistance on both the *completion of compulsory deliverables related to ACTTiVate requirements*, and on the *review of the deliverables after completion*. Specifically, seven of the eight surveyed clusters report to have managed at least 4 inquiries/exchanges related to the former type of support, and six of the eight informs of at least 4 exchanges related to the latter type. In addition, four clusters even report a higher degree of help-desk intensity with more than 6 inquiries/exchanges related to both help-desk subcategories.

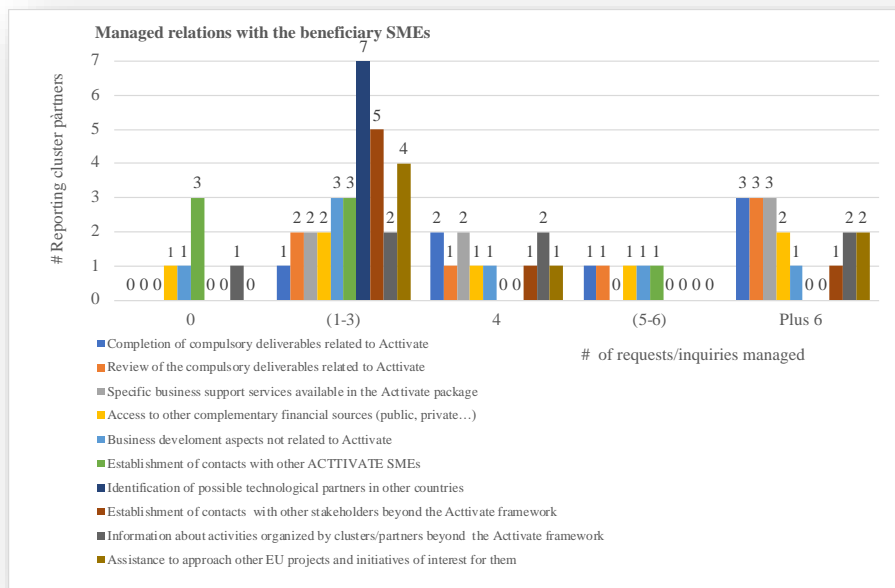
The managed assistance on the *access to other complementary financial sources* (whether public or private) on the one hand, and on *business development aspects not related to ACTTiVate* on other hand shows similar levels of significative help-desk activity. All clusters except one report a medium-to-high help-desk activity under these subcategories (with at least one managed inquiry/exchange), with five and four clusters, those with the larger portfolios under management, informing of at least 4 managed inquiries/exchanges over the period respectively.

Other elements of the relations with the beneficiary SMEs include the support given by the cluster partners to enable the *establishment of contacts / cooperation with other ACTTiVate SMEs*, the

identification of possible technological partners in other countries, and/or establishment of contacts with R&D institutions, special service providers or other stakeholders beyond the ACTTiVate framework. The reported level of requested assistance by the cluster partners on these three help-desk subcategories reveals that SMEs have been neither very active nor particularly interested in applying for this type of assistance within the ACTTiVate context, probably because of a determined (closed) perception of the business support services available to them. In relation to the establishment of contacts with other ACTTiVate SMEs, six of the eight reporting units informs of no activity (3 units) or low activity (3 units with between 1 and 3 inquiries/exchanges). On the identification of possible technological partners in other countries, significantly in this direction, out of the eight reporting clusters seven report to have only managed from 1 to 3 inquiries/exchanges related to this assistance category, and only one informs of more than 6 managed inquiries/exchanges over the period. Again, the volume of indicative requests by cluster partner for assistance to establish contacts with other institutions/stakeholders beyond the ACTTiVate framework fall within the 1-3 range of inquiries over the period in five of the eight reporting units; only two units report a significant help-desk activity related to this subcategory (over 6 managed inquiries/exchanges in the period).

Finally, all reporting clusters inform of some kind of help-desk activity associated to the *assistance to approach other EU projects and initiatives of interest for them* with four units reporting within the 1-3 range of inquiries, and four having managed at least 4 inquiries/exchanges over the period.

Figure 3.



2 CONCLUSIONS

The current report presents the results of a survey based on the judgment of eight Project Officers on behalf of the ACTTiVate cluster partners on the level of help-desk activity associated to the implementation of the ACTTiVate projects over the period November 2017-March 2019. The results provide an overview of the implementation and performance of the follow-up scheme and help-desk activity carried out within the consortium project by the cluster partners.

The cluster organizations have all worked very closely to the population of 50 SMEs beneficiary of the ACTTiVate scheme by leveraging on very high management standards and expertise, and a well-established business support infrastructure, to cater to the beneficiary SMEs' needs and demands, which is reflected by the high degree of help-desk managed activity observed on the various categories of assistance considered.

A significant proportion of the help-desk activity carried out by the cluster partners over the period of analysis (over 90% of the project's execution period) has been focused on managing inquiries and requests for assistance related to the provision to the SMEs of general information about the project and its functioning, and to the provision of direct assistance associated to the specific business support activities implemented under WP5.

The survey also reveals that the cluster partners have managed a significant degree of help-desk activity related to the completion and review of the SMEs' deliverables (a critical requirement to access to the full ACTTiVate funding), the access to alternative financial sources or the assistance on business development aspects not related to ACTTiVate.

In this sense, upon the inquires and demands coming from the SMEs through the "system of collaboration and engagement" de facto operated, cluster partners have directly and indirectly provided an assistance to meet diverse needs by distributing general information, facilitating access to either networks, resources or potential partners, facilitating contacts to corporates and investors, or facilitating matchmaking or project development, etc. This reflects the role the cluster partners have played within the project as enablers and facilitators to provide such an on-demand assistance at the highest standards of service.