



PPP4Broadband CENTRES of EXCELLENCE Common Concept

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Jointly for our common future

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1. Background

To improve the quality of life of the citizens, the existence and the quality of the infrastructure is the key element in order to attract investors, entrepreneurs who will contribute to develop the regions. Broadband is such kind of infrastructure, however, we can still identify significant gaps in the coverage, capacity and quality.

Broadband should ideally be provided by the private providers mainly. Rural areas, specified by the low density of population, are not attractive for private providers – we are calling these areas as areas of market failure. In these areas the public partner role in the infrastructure development and deployment is needed. Public sector, especially currently – in time of austerity measures, has not often capacity to solve Broadband gap in rural areas alone, thus there is need for the cooperation between Private and Public actors.

Thus the objective of PPP4broadband project is to support the Broadband infrastructure development, especially in rural areas, by leveraging the public funds and capacities with private ones. During our work we are addressing 4 objectives. All of them you need to address to really support the PPP Broadband uptake by Public procurers¹.

1. DEVELOP INNOVATIVE TOOLS

Project delivered 9 innovative and customized PPP4Broadband models, to be used in each country across South-East Europe. Our objective is to bring to Public procurer useful tool which will significantly simplify design of Broadband infrastructure project and also simplify the PPP procurement procedure.

2. ESTABLISH SUPPORTING INFRASTRUCTURE

Establishment of PPP4Broadband Centre of Excellence in each participating country will build the supporting infrastructure for Public procurers. PPP4Broadband models will simplify the entire procedure; however the tools themselves are not enough and they have to assure additional knowledge and support provided by above mentioned Centres of excellence.

3. PROVE OF RESEARCHED CONCEPT

It is essential step at the end of our publicly funded work, proving usability of the PPP4Broadband concept. To prove the concept we selected Pilot areas in 3 countries: EU 15 member (Greece); NMS (Romania); Non-EU MS (Former republic of Macedonia)

4. CREATE AWARENESS AND BUILD CAPACITY

These two objectives are essential for the success of the PPP4Broadband concept, coming out from the consensus that the initiator of the PPP procurement is Public actor, we are targeting series of activities under these objectives.

¹ PPP4Broadband project logical framework

2. Aim of the document

The document aims to deliver a common concept for creation of 9 centres of excellence (further referred as CoE) that are to be established in the framework of the project PPP4Broadband in all partner's regions, dispersed across South East Europe.

PPP4Broadband CoE should be supporting public actors across SEE in usage of PPP models in Broadband development, their role will be especially in the areas of knowledge experience, guidance for using developed PPP Models and standardization.

PPP4Broadband CoE will operate in all participating countries following the same standards (customized based on national legislative frameworks), structure and quality. In order to achieve this there was developed the present Joint Concept for operation of CoEs in PPP4broadband SEE regions.

3. Methodology for establishment of national centres of excellence

As laid down in the application form of PPP4Broadband project, Centres of Excellence will be established by all project partners in all partner's regions. In further chapters the methodology for establishment of CoEs in all partner's countries is proposed.

3.1 What is a centre of excellence?

According to the fundamental definition, the CoE aims at promoting the concentration of knowledge at priority technological areas and horizontal linking along the entire chain of knowledge development, which is realised on the basis of strategic partnerships between the public sector, private sector and academia.

CoE at a most basic level consists of a team of people that promote collaboration and using best practices around a specific focus area to drive business results.

Fundamental definitions of CoEs comprise key features which are a part of the general concept (Strickler, 2008):

- a "critical mass" of experts and/or technology developers;
- a well-identified structure having its own research agenda;
- capable of integrating connected fields and to associate complementary skills;
- capable of maintaining a high rate of exchange of qualified human resources;
- a dynamic role in the surrounding innovation system (adding value to knowledge);



- high levels of international visibility and scientific and/or industrial connectivity;
- a reasonable stability of funding and operating conditions over time (the basis for investing in people and building partnerships);
- sources of finance which are not dependent over time on public funding.

Initially PPP4Broadband CoEs, however, do not anticipate having such wide competences. As being defined in the further chapter, PPP4Broadband centres of excellence will primarily aim at sharing the knowledge experiences in the field of PPP models for broadband deployment at rural areas, to support public actors in the usage of PPP models in broadband development, to guide them in using of these models, standardisation and updating knowledge.

Nevertheless, PPP4Broadband national CoEs have all potential and base to outgrow the initially facilitated structure to a larger one having the properties and nature of an RTD based CoE.

Centres of excellence evolve continuously. Together with a well-educated workforce, they are essential for endogenous economic growth as well as to attract private investment².

Research activity itself more and more attempts to capture and make best use of frontier knowledge in multidisciplinary dimensions. Although physical concentration of excellent researchers is still a key factor in RTD productivity, advanced ICT tools progressively allow effective interaction in networks. Indeed, the SEE network of PPP4Broadband CoE will be formed in a later stage.

Following the definition of the Strickler (2008), PPP4Broadband CoE will address the following 5 needs³:

1. Support

For their area of focus (PPP usage in BB deployment), CoE's should offer support to the business lines. This may be through services needed, or providing subject matter experts.

2. Guidance:

CoE will provide standards, methodologies, tools and knowledge repositories

3. Shared Learning:

Training and certifications, formalized roles and knowledge exchange within the network of CoEs are all ways to encourage shared learning.

4. Measurements:

CoEs should be able to demonstrate they are delivering the valued results that justified their creation through the use of output metrics.

5. Governance:

Allocating limited resources (money, people,...) across all their possible use is an important function of CoEs. They should ensure organizations invest in the most valuable projects and create economies of scale for their service offering.

² EU Commission - research. *Action for "centres of excellence" with a European dimension*

³ Strickler, Jon. 2008. *What is a Centre of Excellence*, Agile Elements

3.2 Definition of the national PPP4Broadband Centre of Excellence

National PPP4Broadband CoE will primary aim to concentrate the technological knowledge in the field of PPP models for broadband deployment at rural areas, developed within WP3 and customized to local / national frameworks within WP4 of PPP4Broadband project.

Not only that PPP4Broadband CoE will be supporting public actors in the usage of PPP models in Broadband development, their role will be especially in the areas of knowledge experience, guidance for usage of PPP Models, and standardization as well as in the concentration of the up to date knowledge in the given research area.

All CoE will operate based on the same quality standards with the same management structure. To achieve this, the project partners will in addition to the present document develop and approve also an operation guideline for operation of the CoE.

3.3 Facilitation process

The process of the facilitation of the national CoEs will follow the logical framework of the PPP4Broadband project definition. The present document represents the base for the national CoE establishment and will be delivered in two versions: a) first draft version and finally b) Final version.

In order to assure that the proposed methodology is acceptable and viable, project partners will undertake the public consultations on their national levels, where the first draft of this document will be discussed. Wherever applicable, the public consultation should be in conjunction with national legislations on public consultation. At the same time the WP4 responsible (lead partner) will undertake the international public consultations as well. In order to assure homogeneous approach across all partners, a separate extensive document⁴ was prepared, describing the process of the public consultations.

After public consultations, a final version of the Common concept will be elaborated and will represent the base for the national CoE establishment. Indeed we are aware that we are not in competence to establish and officially recognize the CoEs on national level. Hence, the name of CoEs will omit the word “national” and therefore its name will be PPP4Broadband CoE – country name.

In the chart no 1 is presented the facilitation process and public procurement process.

⁴ Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic. 2007. Proposal of Procedure to Introduce Methodology for Public Consultation at Elaboration of Government Documents.

Chart no 1: CoE facilitation process

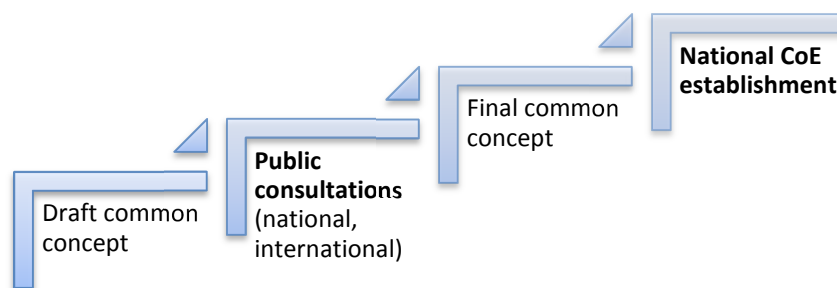


Chart no 2: Public consultations process



3.4 Organizational structure and management

PPP4Broadband CoEs on national levels will be established and managed by the project partners in their countries. Each project partner, except the testing partners will be responsible for operation of their Centre of Excellence.

CoEs won't be legally formalized; hence they will be settled as open self-initiative entity.

CoEs will be initially facilitated as virtual entities. As a proof of establishment of the CoE, the partners will be asked to present the initial public notification of the newly established CoE (e.g. announcement about the establishment of the CoE on their web sites). Partners will be also asked to create a special section on their web pages, dedicated to their national CoE, containing basic information about their PPP4Broadband CoE. In later stage when the PPP4Broadband CoE portal will be launched the national sections will be redirecting the visitors to the common PPP4Broadband portal that will also contain 9 national sections.

Additionally partners are requested to share this information among their local stakeholders and other relevant target groups of the PPP4Broadband project. Partners will be asked to deliver the proof in the form of the initial email to their stakeholders containing the information about the national CoE establishment.



3.5 Risk management

Having identified common sources or "problem areas," dispute prevention mechanisms should encourage all parties involved to bring up promptly and seek to resolve any miscommunications or dissatisfactions which they are aware of.

In circumstances or projects where PPP4Broadband CoEs and local public procurers will be working together over extended periods of time, there is substantial value in the parties meeting regularly (whether there's trouble or not), keeping lines of communication open, monitoring their relationships, tracking progress of their efforts.

Contemplating that such efforts may not fully eliminate the basis of potential disagreement, it is also smart to include guidelines that encourage parties to document their discussions and resolutions. Some situations may justify having standard panels of neutrals in place so that small disagreements are addressed and resolved quickly before they escalate.

The avoidance of disputes works most effectively if incorporated or integrated into the operations of the CoE. The seeds of disputes lie in the myriad of encounters between the CoE and its partners others over the course of its activities. To a large degree, dispute avoidance requires that the personnel recognize those situations that can lead to divergent interests between parties that easily ripen into outright disputes that might even require the involvement of a third party to resolve⁵.

Common sources of risk

- Risk from general CoE operation
- Risk of intellectual property rights
- Risks related to the management control of the CoE
- Risks associated with the potential market developments that would substitute current technologies
- Risks associated with access of CoE to necessary skills and competent people to facilitate and support the PPP projects

Individual sources of risk

There is still, however the risk deriving from the national or local specifics and the nature of the particular service that is affecting only particular CoE.

⁵ MLMR – management litigation reference model. 2013. Minimizing and resolving disputes. Dispute Prevention and Management and its Relationship to Litigation:
<http://mlrm.net/Shared%20Documents/dispute-prevention-and-management.aspx>



4. Services / activities of national centres of excellence

Services of the national CoE will be provided based on the common standards in order to assure the level of quality across all CoEs. Common standards of operation will be more in detail defined in the document “PPP4Broadband CoE operation guideline” during the further periods of the project. CoE Operation guideline will be elaborated based on the inputs of all project partners, taking into consideration best practices of quality standards developed in the frameworks of European community.

The services of the CoEs will be mainly offered to the national public procurers. Partly the CoEs will be able to provide services independently and partly by international team running under international SEE CoE network.

4.1 Common quality standards

In order to assure the quality of the services provided by CoEs, common quality services and standards should be developed. This chapter explains the list of the common services initially provided by the CoE as a result of the facilitation process and how and when the service standards will be developed and applied.

Generally Common quality and service standards define the level of which, in terms of management and service provision, services are expected to attain. With other words, common quality and service standards define the level which is expected to be reached in relation to the service delivery to its end-users. Service standards outline specific targets of delivery and comprise set of commitments which have to be followed when delivering the service.

On the other hand, the standards serve as guidance for the end-users (in this case CoEs and public actors) on what they are to expect to get from the service and in which quality. The service standards therefore keep the provider accountable for the quality level of the services provided and ensure consistency of the services in relation to the users.

The standards are developed according to some principles which set out the core values of welfare services. These principles are⁶:

- to clearly define the purposes and objectives of the service and make its mode of delivery transparent to the public;
- to manage resources effectively with flexibility, innovation and continuous quality improvement;
- to identify and respond to specific service user’s needs;

⁶ Social Welfare Department, Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, http://www.swd.gov.hk/en/index/site_ngo/page_serviceper/sub_serviceper/id_servicequa/



- to respect the rights of service users.

Common quality and service standards are for the moment not yet defined. Hence this issue will be addressed within the next project's period when Operation Guideline will be proposed.

Moreover also common marketing service standards will be defined, given that the promotion is as one of the major services of the network as well as of the particular CoE in order to promote and boost internationalization of CoEs.

4.2 List of services

CoE will initially offer services that are researched and delivered within the PPP4Broadband project. The initial list of services offered by CoE contains the services deriving from the research work within the project.

Initial services of the national CoEs:

1. Consultation to public procurers for usage of PPP4Broadband models
2. Education for public procurers for usage of the PPP models
3. Awareness creation across public procurers within the national / regional territory
4. Representing the concept of PPP for BB infrastructure development towards relevant national public administration bodies

Due to the concentration of the knowledge and the spill over effects, the initial list of services is expected to expand over the project life with services that go beyond the project scope.

5. Dissemination of results

An important requirement for the CoE is the dissemination of results and knowledge dissemination. PPP4Broadband research partnership is part of a larger collaboration that includes the interests of each partner and spans a wide range of activities⁷.

Even though often neglected, in busy research schedules the dissemination of key findings upon particular project phase completion is a crucial step. In fact, we believe that project partners have an obligation to ensure that research findings are disseminated to research participants, as well as other individuals and institutions in the communities in which we work.

⁷ CARE: Community Alliance for Research and Engagement. Beyond Scientific Publication: Strategies for Disseminating Research Findings

CoEs should ensure that the key findings and research results are disseminated in two levels:

1. Internal dissemination

Towards the members of the SEE network of PPP4Broadband CoE

2. External dissemination

Towards public (target groups and institution's key stakeholders)

Dissemination of results is one of the important activities both for national CoE as well as for the network of CoE. Detailed dissemination plan of the results is already embedded to the communication plan of the PPP4Broadband project and it is showing the timeline and the responsibilities of the project partners along with the key messages and key target groups.

The main communication channels are:

- Web site of PPP4Broadband project
- PPP4Broadband CoE Portal with 9 national sections
- Partner's institutional web sites
- Events (PPP4Broadband days, final conferences, other public conferences, national info days)
- Regular newsletters
- LinkedIn group (PPP4Broadband)
- Twitter account @PPP4B
- Dissemination packs (leaflets, DVDs, brochures)

6. Intellectual property

According to the partnership agreement the Project Participants take note of the fact that the results of the project as well as any study or analysis produced in the course of the project will be made available to the public and they agree that the results of the project shall be available for all Project Participants and for the public free of charge.

7. Timeline

<i>December 2013</i>	Establishment of the national Centres of Excellence
<i>March 2014</i>	Launch of the PPP4Broadband CoE Portal with 9 national sections
<i>April 2014</i>	CoE Operation Guidelines
<i>June 2014</i>	SEE network of CoE formalized by the signature of the cooperation agreement
<i>December 2014 – onwards</i>	Post project life of the SEE network of CoE

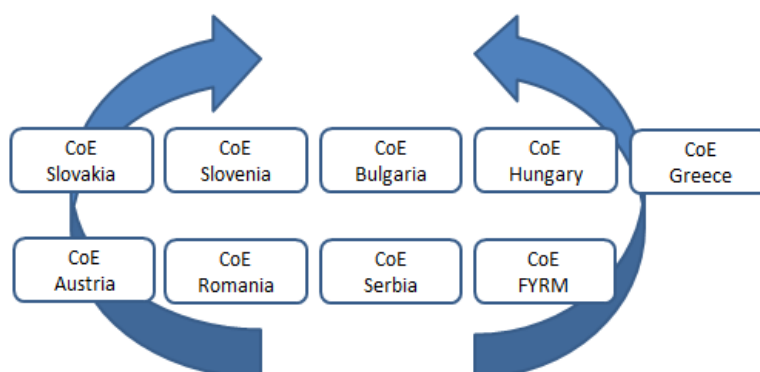
8. Network of PPP4Broadband centres of excellence

Networking can generally result in many benefits including expanded international network, linkage to the up to date international knowledge and strengthened cross-fertilisation⁸. Based on above also PPP4Broadband project foresees the creation of the SEE network of PPP4Broadband CoE in order to benefit from internationalization and knowledge exchange among different regions of SEE including EU-15, NMS and non-member states.

During the further project life the SEE network of PPP4Broadband centres of excellence will be formalized with signing of the cooperation agreement.

Within the cooperation agreement, the project partners of PPP4Broadband project will bind themselves to operate CoE and provide all services in required quality, as laid down in the quality standards that will be a part of the Operation guideline. Project partners will also agree to realize the Transnational Action Plan in the timeframe of 2 years after the project closure.

SEE network of PPP4Broadband CoEs



⁸ Clusters Cord project. *Strategic Plan for energy and environment Meta cluster creation*. 2012.



Project partners would like to move from plain virtual networking and learning among CoEs towards true commercial collaboration. The main aim is to expand international linkages and strengthen the know-how capacities in order to assure the excellence.

a. List of national centres of excellence

Each national CoE will be a member of a newly created SEE network of PPP4Broadband CoE. The list of the national CoEs and its responsible partners is presented in the table below.

Country	Responsible partner for operation of CoE
Slovakia	Agency for innovation and European cooperation
Slovenia	ICT Technology networks institute
Bulgaria	Technical University of Gabrovo
Hungary	INNOSKART
Greece	Patras municipal Enterprise for Planning and development S.A
Romania	National Institute for research and development in informatics ICI- Bucharest
Austria	FH JOANNEUM University of Applied Sciences
Serbia	Vojvodina ICT cluster
Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	Center for knowledge management

b. Operation of the network

SEE network of PPP4Broadband CoE will be facilitated in the framework of the project and will be led by the Agency for innovation and European cooperation (AIEC) that is a lead partner and also WP4 leader of the project.

After the project closure the partners will vote whether the network will be further chaired by AIEC or it will be transferred to another partner for a period of 1 calendar year. Each year the network members will define who will take over the leadership and management of the network.



c. CoE Network portal

PPP4Broadband CoE Portal with 9 national sections will be launched in first quarter of 2014 and will serve as a key communication tool for promoting the services to target groups. Portal's main language will be English; however it will contain also 9 national language sections. The portal will frame all developed services within the PPP4Broadband project and also those developed beyond the project's scope. All customized PPP models, all advisory services and all customized guideline for public actors will be published there.



References

1. CARE: Community Alliance for Research and Engagement. Beyond Scientific Publication: Strategies for Disseminating Research Findings
2. Clusters Cord project. *Strategic Plan for energy and environment Meta cluster creation*. 2012.
3. EU Commission - research. Action for "centres of excellence" with a European dimension
4. Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic. 2007. Proposal of Procedure to Introduce Methodology for Public Consultation at Elaboration of Government Documents.
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7. Strickler, Jon. 2008. What is a Center of Excellence, Agile Elements, <http://agileelements.wordpress.com/2008/10/29/what-is-a-center-of-excellence/>