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Innovation Hub Euregio Meuse-Rhine
HYPEREGIO
EarlyTech

EarlyTech B2S Voucher

GUIDE FOR APPLICANTS



A. GENERAL INFORMATION ON EARLYTECH

Target of the HYPEREGIO projects is to create a “cross-border value chain for innovation for companies, especially SMEs”(!) starting from the very early-stage of idea generation / problem solving and ending at the latest possible pre-competitive stage before market entry. Each project covers a specific range of actions, tools and measures, supporting each other, using and developing further the results along this chain. These are the different targets and foci of the projects.

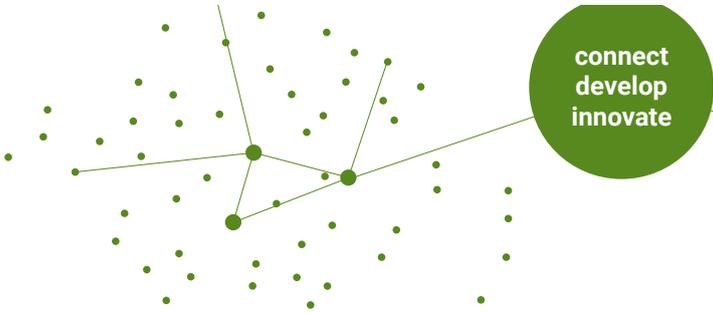
For “EarlyTech” the basic idea is to provide businesses, esp. SMEs, substantial support in the very early stage of technology and knowledge transfer. Project focus is on problem solving for SMEs on the one hand via connecting an SME with a knowledge institution (1:1 technology transfer) and on the other hand via offering them new opportunities for recruiting human resources (knowledge transfer):

- focus on cross-border relations between businesses and science (B2S) and vice versa (S2B)
- thematic and branch-specific B2S-oriented events
- network antennas: “technology transfer managers” are in contact with the business and the research environment
- B2S vouchers (3,000 € each) for SMEs, dedicated for problem-solving / technology transfer activity by a knowledge institution across the border, no additional sources for R&D-projects

You can find further information on the website: hyperregio.eu

This guide gives you a detailed overview regarding the EarlyTech B2S Vouchers and how to apply for them. Vouchers are provided for innovative cooperations of SMEs and knowledge institutions across the national borders (so-called: cross-border cooperation). The voucher is aimed at solving a technology transfer or innovation task of an SME in an early stage by granting free research / advice from a knowledge provider in the Greater EMR area. One SME and one knowledge provider from two different national regions of this area cooperate with each other. Only the participating SME can apply for a B2S voucher.

If you are looking for partners, suppliers, etc. across the national borders, our regional TT-managers will give you hands-on support in order to do so (for further details on the conditions see: ‘B. B2S voucher cooperations’).



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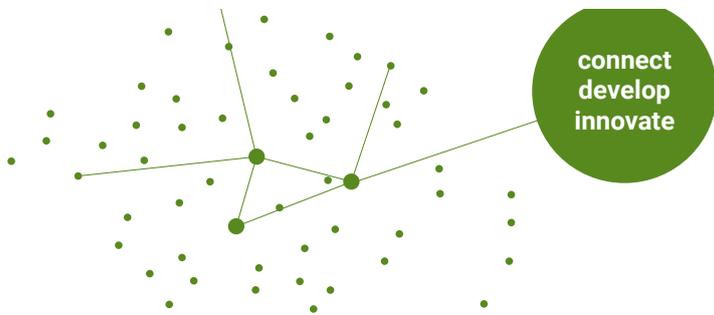
Partner regions belonging to the Greater EMR area as well as institutions who can provide further information on EarlyTech B2S Vouchers are:

- Belgium: Basse Meuse Développement, GREOVA, PXL Hogeschool, WfG Ostbelgien
- Germany: AGIT (lead partner), Stadt Aachen, Städteregion Aachen, Kreis Euskirchen, Region Aachen Zweckverband, FH Aachen
- The Netherlands: Stichting Zuyd Hogeschool

EarlyTech B2S Voucher providing partners are:

- Belgium: Basse Meuse Développement, GREOVA, WfG Ostbelgien
- Germany: AGIT (lead partner), Stadt Aachen, Städteregion Aachen, Kreis Euskirchen, Region Aachen Zweckverband

One entity of the cross-border cooperation applied for, thus, needs to be from East-Belgium, Aachen region or Liège region. The other cooperation partners may also be from other EMR regions.



B. B2S VOUCHER COOPERATIONS

One technology-oriented SME and one knowledge provider, independent from each other, from two sides of the national border within the Greater EMR area¹, can form a cross-border B2S cooperation or develop / carry-out an innovation activity. One partner needs to be from East-Belgium, Aachen region or Liège region.

Only the SME within the cross-border cooperation can apply for a B2S Voucher (see 'C. Procedure for allocation of vouchers').

The B2S voucher provides access to a cross-border facility ('provider') in the Greater EMR area. Providers from other destinations are not applicable.

A voucher is a cheque worth € 3,000 (excluding VAT) which is non-transferable and will not be paid out in cash. It is distributed by the EarlyTech-partnership to a selected SME ('recipient'). The recipient can use this voucher to 'purchase' an innovation service from an external provider, who is independent from the applicant. The innovation voucher is granted as a non-repayable grant for purchasing external research / consultancy services.

Activities 'purchased' using a voucher could for example include a feasibility study, a patent research, the use of laboratories and state-of-the-art equipment or prototyping and testing. The voucher is not be used to pay for management consultants, basic research or standard tasks (e.g. physical and/or chemical analysis).

Up to € 3,000 the voucher will cover 100 % of the costs of the service provided by the facility. A project may be larger than the value of the voucher, which means that the voucher will cover only part of the total project costs.

The current thresholds for public procurement in each country have to be taken into account. Decisive is the total cost of the service from an external provider, not just the part that is covered by the voucher.

Only one B2S voucher will be granted per SME at the same time. Additional B2S voucher activities of the same SME are allowed under the condition that previous activities had been completed (evaluated and paid). The B2S voucher will be provided to the recipient, which applied for it. The recipient receiving and using the voucher agrees to take part in an evaluation after the service has been rendered.

¹ NUTS3-units are Zuid- and Midden-Limburg, Nordoost-Brabant (all NL), arrondissements Maaseik, Tongeren, Hasselt, Leuven, Verviers (incl. Deutschsprachige Gemeinschaft Belgiens) and Liège (all B), kreisfreie Stadt Aachen, StädteRegion Aachen, Kreise Düren, Euskirchen and Heinsberg (all D).



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The provision of the advice / research is subject to the terms and conditions of performance of the advising / researching party; these are set out in a contract. The provider works solely on the basis of his / her own knowledge and expertise.

C. PROCEDURE FOR ALLOCATION OF B2S VOUCHERS

Applications for B2S vouchers have to be submitted through a completed application form, which will be used for a single stage evaluation and selection by the EarlyTech partners. Proposals must be sent via e-mail to the EarlyTech lead partner and the Regional contact point (see below for details).

The application form can be downloaded from the project website (hyperregio.eu). The application form is submitted by the SME ('recipient'), but should already include the details of the facility ('provider') and activities for which the voucher will be used, as well as the offer of the knowledge. If a partnership does not exist so far, designated applicants are asked to use the form to fill in relevant competencies / potential partners needed for building it up and provide this form additionally to their regional TT-manager, who will support him in finding the right partner(s) across the border(s).

The validity of the voucher covers the execution of an order by a provider deemed to be suitable by the recipient and the granting ad hoc-group "EarlyTech B2S Vouchers". In addition to the B2S voucher application an offer from the knowledge provider has to be coordinated before a voucher is definitely awarded. The order must be placed before the date shown in the voucher.

Evaluation of eligible applications will be based on the selection criteria indicated in the section 'E. Guidelines for applicants' below. Subsequent selection and allocation of vouchers will be done by the ad hoc-group "EarlyTech B2S Vouchers", taking into account the following three aspects:

- Evaluation score, following the selection criteria
- Available budget per region
- Territorial balance in SMEs and facilities that receive vouchers

The evaluation and allocation of B2S vouchers by the ad-hoc group will be carried out on-demand. Both, successful and unsuccessful proposers, will receive notification of the decision whether their proposal has been selected for funding.



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The B2S voucher will be send together with this notification to successful proposers. The notification will contain further information for the execution of the activity, such as the final reporting form, as well as invoicing and payment procedures.

In case of any doubts and questions about the application procedure for the B2S voucher scheme, please contact the regional contact points for your region (see below for details).

D. EXECUTION OF A B2S VOUCHER ACTIVITY

In case the B2S voucher application is approved, successful applicants shall make their best efforts to start the execution as soon as possible, with a maximum of three months after approval. Before the start of the cooperation, the SME ('recipient') will need to sign a short "letter of agreement" with the regional contact point of the recipient. The regional contact point will send the voucher and two copies of this "letter of agreement" to the recipient. After having signed them, one copy has to be sent back to the contact point and one remains at the recipient.

The following steps for execution of a EarlyTech B2S voucher have to be taken:

1. Based on the signed "letter of agreement" the recipient commissions the provider with consultancy / research service.
2. On completion of the consultancy / research service, the provider sends an invoice to the recipient (and a copy to the relevant regional contact point).
3. The recipient pays the provider.
4. The recipient officially sends confirmation to the regional contact point that the consultancy / research service has been completed and that payment can be made (including a copy of the proof of payment). Additionally, the provider and the recipient are required to complete an "Evaluation report"-form to be submitted together with the confirmation, in which a short description of activities performed, results delivered, possible future cooperation considered and feedback about the B2S voucher is given.
5. The regional contact point pays the recipient a maximum of € 3,000.

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E. GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS

Voucher applications are to be submitted by SMEs which have already identified the facility they would like to work with. SMEs which have not yet identified a suitable provider for cooperation can contact the Regional contact points. Contact details for the Regional contact points are given at the end of this document.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Eligibility criteria are given below. If you have questions about eligibility, please contact your Regional contact point.

Eligible 'recipients' of a B2S voucher must be:

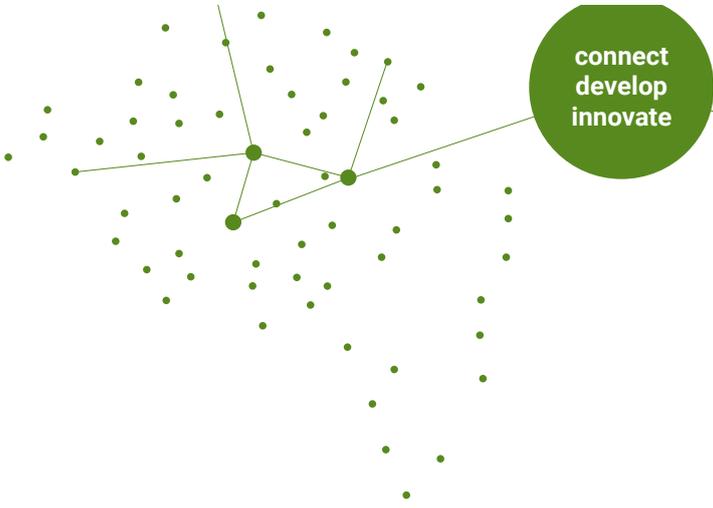
- a Small or Medium-sized Enterprise (under EU definitions¹) including start-up companies,
- located within one of the participating regions (for exact definitions see 'B. B2S voucher cooperations'),
- not in receivership or under liquidation at the time of receiving the voucher.

To be eligible as a 'provider' a facility must be a university, hospital (with R&D activities), public or private research centre or company (incl. engineering offices) located within the Greater EMR area, which is not participating in the EarlyTech-partnership. Providers must be from a different country than the recipient ("cross-border").

Eligible activities are defined as follows; they should

- be centred on or combine technology/services
- be innovative
- be limited to one of the following activity areas: access to equipment, analytical services, short research projects, clinical trials, product design/prototype manufacture, technical training,
- consultancy services: only for transfer of specific technical knowledge,
- reasonably to be executed within the limited timeframe of 3 months.

¹ COMMISSION REGULATION (EC) No 364/2004 of 25 February 2004 amending Regulation (EC) No 70/2001 as regards the extension of its scope to include aid for research and development.



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Not eligible are:

- activities that could be considered as part of ongoing projects between the knowledge provider and SME,
- general business consultancy, marketing or any other activities that are not part of the R&D activities of the SME and
- basic research, standard tasks (e.g. physical and/or chemical tests) or own research and development hours of SME.

SELECTION CRITERIA

The following criteria will be used in the selection process:

- innovative results to be expected out of the proposed activities (innovativeness)
- foreseeable degree of a market-oriented cooperation initiated by the voucher (market potential)
- quality of high-tech/service element of the voucher and its contribution to the R&D strategy of the recipient / the consortia (high-tech-character)
- expected degree of regional interlinkage(s) with an / several SME(s) across the national borders (regional impact)

Furthermore the contribution for constituting a new working relationship between the SMEs and the opportunity to initiate a larger (follow up) project emerging from the voucher activity will be taken into account.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Successful recipients and providers will be expected to:

- comply with any national state-aid rules
- agree IP positions before undertaking the work. The EarlyTech project partnership recommends that IP generated by the project is owned by the recipient of the B2S voucher.
- Agree to complete the project within the specified timeframe.
- Complete a short final report within 15 days after the end of the project.
- Participate in one EarlyTech or Innovation2Market networking event, evaluating and probably enlarging the activity.

EarlyTech partners assume that in the majority of cases no IPR agreement will be needed since a voucher activity would be too small for IPR to be generated. In exceptional cases where IPR is involved, such agreement can be signed between the facility and the SME.