

# DANUBE ENERGY + ECOSYSTEM PACKAGE

*Learning system for key regional ecosystem actors*

October 2019

## Executive Summary

**Danube Energy+ Ecosystem Package (Package)** is a learning system to advance knowledge of key regional innovation ecosystem actors (regional public authorities, universities, business support organisations, industry actors). Package helps create an enabling environment for innovation by guiding ecosystem actors in:

- 1) **Identification** of YI in their ecosystems
- 2) **Motivation** of YI to further develop their disruptive ideas to marketable solutions
- 3) **Implementation** of the Danube Energy+ Tool to boost knowledge of YI to scale-up their ideas to ventures
- 4) **Connection** of YI with other key stakeholders in regional ecosystems

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## 1. Introduction

The entrepreneurship environment and culture in the Danube macro-region is weaker and less developed comparing to other EU countries for historical reasons. Young Innovators in the region often fail to turn their ideas into marketable solutions for variety of reasons, including lack of experience and knowledge, inadequate business support and information, or insufficient funding. As identified also in the European Union Strategy for the Danube region, energy inefficient solutions were introduced in the past in the Danube region, local energy prices are high, primary energy is imported and energy markets are fragmented. Thus, engaging Young Innovators in this region and unlocking their potential to address the energy efficiency specific challenges in the region is a top priority for innovation ecosystem actors. Danube Energy+ Ecosystem Package as learning system for key regional ecosystem actors should help to tackle the aforementioned challenges.

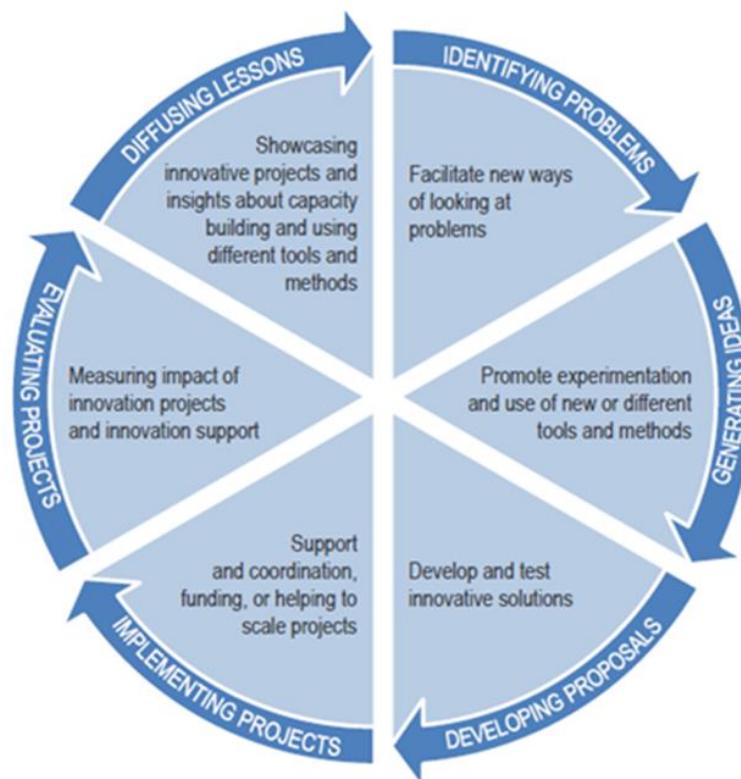


Figure 1. Innovation lifecycle (adapted from OECD (2017))

There are ways how innovation ecosystem actors can create an enabling environment for innovation through support in all stages of innovation lifecycle, as shown in figure 1:

1. Identifying problems: Help young innovators to identify problems in the energy field and facilitate new ways of looking at problems
2. Generating ideas: Promote experimentation and use of new or different tools and methods for idea generation
3. Developing proposals: Help Young Innovators develop and test innovative solutions
4. Implementing projects: Support and coordinate efforts of Young Innovators to implement projects, secure or help with securing funding and help to scale projects
5. Evaluating projects: Measure impact of innovation projects and innovation support
6. Diffusing lessons: Showcase innovative projects and insights about capacity building and using different tools and methods (OECD 2017)

Danube Energy+ Ecosystem Package (Package) is developed under Interreg Danube Energy+ project which main objective is to create an enabling environment, which will support Young innovators to pioneer a change in the energy efficiency area by setting up highly innovative startups in the Danube macro-region. An integrated part of the Danube Energy+ ecosystem Package is the innovative Danube Energy+ Tool representing the pre-acceleration learning scheme for Young Innovators.

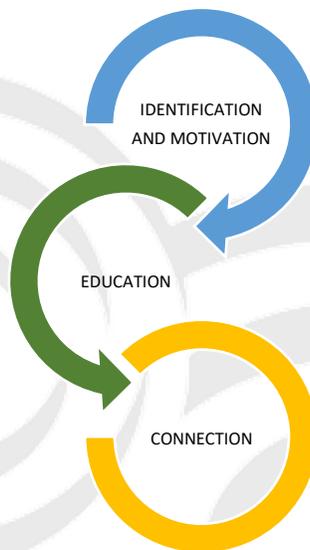
Package is developed to help ecosystem actors engage in these pre-acceleration activities. To demonstrate impact, attractiveness of the tool and also further advance stakeholders knowledge on using the tool, there will be Pilots carried out in all 9 regions. 10 Young innovators per region (90 in total) will participate. Pilot will fully demonstrate usage of developed tool in real world environment.

## 2. Basic characteristics of Danube Energy+ Package

Danube Energy+ Ecosystem Package (Package) is developed through learning interaction among project partners of Interreg Danube Energy+ project and inclusive design process involving key actors of regional ecosystems: regional public authorities, universities, BSOs, SMEs and industry representatives.

Package should be used as a guideline for ecosystem actors through industry challenges, models and practices for identification, motivation and connection of Young Innovators in their ecosystems and the usage of the developed Danube Energy+ Tool (Tool). Tool representing the pre-acceleration learning scheme for Young Innovators (YI) with highly innovative disruptive idea in energy efficiency field. The aim of the Tool is to boost their knowledge on business/industry challenges, competition, customer/market validation, business skills, business modelling, team setting up and legal start-up issues helping them to scale up their idea towards successful venture.

As shown in the figure 2, apart from education, the challenges of identifying and motivating YIs to participate in the pre-acceleration learning programme must be addressed and strategically answered also. Connecting YIs with other ecosystem stakeholders is key to ensure the support and opportunities for their ideas to be developed within the region.



*Figure 2. Key activities of Danube Energy+ Package*

### 3. Structure of Danube Energy+ Package

Package as an innovative learning system to advance knowledge of key actors of regional ecosystems in the area of energy innovation consists of:

- 1) Dynamic presentation of the industry challenges, success cases and pre-acceleration programmes benefits for YI and ecosystem actors
- 2) Models, strategies, and good practices for YI identification, motivation and connection to regional ecosystem actors
- 3) Training workshop materials on Tool usage.

#### 3.1. Dynamic presentation of industry challenges

Dynamic presentation of the industry challenges in sustainable energy and energy efficiency through animation video ensure better understanding of the field and the value of informal education by ecosystem actors, especially regional public administrations, business supporting actors and universities. The presentation made in form of animated video includes:

- Presentation of the future and challenges of the industry through interview with Dr. Dirk Bessau, Business Development Manager of InnoEnergy Office Berlin;
- Interview with successful European YIs which emphasize benefits of education and the impact it had on their business development;
- Pre-acceleration programme (Tool) benefits for YIs and ecosystem actors.

**Synopsis:** Video start by telling a story about the individual responsibility we have towards our planet. The answer on the question: *How it is possible to succeed in every environment?* is included in the story and one of the European YI's is presented as an example. The industry challenges and his story was intertwined with an animation elements which explain the benefits of the pre-acceleration program Danube Energy +.

**Concept:** Video emphasize a role of an individual on this planet, make YIs feel meaningful to the world, help them to see that they could be the one who would change something for the better. Point out that the first step towards doing that would be improving themselves. And YIs will improve themselves if they constantly educate themselves, work on new skills and are constantly moving forward.

**The main messages of the video are:** *We will help you grow and fulfil your dreams, find your purpose and have a meaningful life. We will give you a tool for the development of your idea, and bring you into the community of innovators. We would also like to present you an example of successful YIs and prove to you that change can happen anywhere. Also, we will develop your idea and give you directions about financial support for your innovative project.*

**Where the video will potentially be shown?**

The video should be used during motivation workshops for YI as a tool to inspire and motivate them toward participating in the developed pre-acceleration programme, as well as help them in their idea generation and venture creation.

**What you are offering to the viewer of the video?**

Motivations to participate in pre-acceleration programme through interview with successful European YIs and outputs and key benefits of the Tool explained by animation (e.g. Figure 3.)



*Figure 3. How Tool can help YIs to scale up the idea to successful venture?*

### 3.2. Models for identification, motivation and connection of YI

In general, attracting YI and stakeholders depends on the offer and branding. Targeted marketing and clear communication about the Tool criteria, what it offers and to whom, is key. The Tool providers should organize motivational workshops and other events which will be open to everyone or will be just a place to meet, to get motivation to apply or inspiration for the ideas / solutions for the industrial challenges that will be presented. Very short and intensive events (e.g. hackathons, startup meetups...) should be focused on connecting YI to a range of mentors and experts specializing in different industry fields and to encourage collaborative development, and test whether an idea may be viable for the pre-acceleration program.

As simple as it sounds, the true challenge of Program implementation starts at the very beginning, within the first activity: *Where to find YI under the age of 35? With an idea of energy efficient product or service? That might have entrepreneurial aspirations?* Since every mentioned criteria reduces the number of possible candidates, the suggested model for identification, motivation and connection of YI is from the bottom up. The searching paradigm can be divided into the following stages:



Figure 4. How to find YIs which wants to develop their disruptive idea to marketable solutions?

**Good practices for identification of YI** are listed below:

1. **Personal environment:** *Who do I know that might be suitable candidate for the Program? With whom had I work with in the past that might be interested in Program?* Search through personal social media channels (FB, LinkedIn, Twitter, etc) might bring the idea on where to search for YI. When this first step is examined we shall move to the next round;
2. **Universities** – such as Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, Faculty of Chemistry, Faculty of Electrical Engineering, Faculty of Economics, and Biotechnical Faculty – the students of natural sciences on general are the target audience of the project. One e-mail with a kind invitation to collaborate on the Program send to student offices of the faculties. Value proposition that should be emphasized in such communications is the fact that the Program equips YI with a business development skills. The main message of the email invite is: *We are providing young folks with the opportunity that might come once in a lifetime. We are aiming to provide something meaningful and terrific for the youngsters and society alike. The future is bright – therefore we need more energy!*
3. **Student Associations** are a good platform for the presentation of the benefits of the Program. At the student clubs the presentation should be conducted in a more casual way, less formal than at the Faculties but with the same commitment.
4. **Interest Groups** could be addressed through the Chamber of Commerce. Energy industry or Engineering community or civil engineering associations have among their membership young people with many ideas, some of them might be the ones we are looking for.
5. Regional **Centers of Innovation/Hubs** are valuable crossroads of many industries that might help with promotional activities of the Program. One well-prepared presentation to their membership should present enrichment of their usual program.
6. **Hobby/amateur associations** (such as radio amateurs and alike) would be potentially another path to convey the message about the Program benefits.
7. Promotional activities through **Social Networks** within the paid and targeted campaigns to promote the awareness of the program.

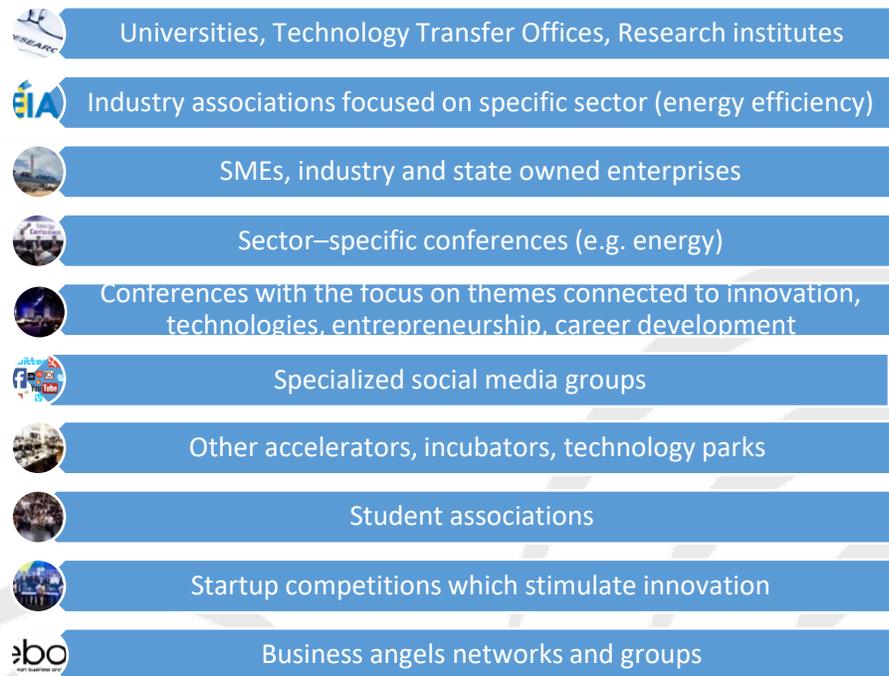
With the aim to identify and to motivate YI to participate into the Program and with the intention to connect as many relevant actors in the field it is suggested to organize 10 visits to the institutions, hubs or centers where potential YI can be found and 2 half-day workshops to network and engage all before the Open Call.



Figure 5. Strategy for the Identification and motivation of Young Innovators

### 3.2.1. Identification

With the aim to identify talented YIs and to select good ideas it is suggested to visit centers with sources of YI, and organize workshops such as idea generation workshops or hackathons which are also designed to motivate YI. The visits should include a presentation of the Tool, showing success cases of YI who established successful ventures in the energy efficiency field and an open discussion with YI concerning their questions, ideas and needs. There are multiple organizations, stakeholders and channels that Tool providers can engage with to source and attract YIs (listed at Figure 6.)



*Figure 6. Sources of Young Innovators*

### 3.2.2. Motivation

Motivational activities have to be implemented as soon as sources of YIs are identified. Motivational activities include activities which promote entrepreneurship in general and in the energy efficiency area and which promote the Energy+ Tool pre-acceleration programme. These also include ensuring visibility of the pre-acceleration programme and easily accessible information on the programme.

### **Examples of motivation activities:**

- Presentation of the Danube Energy+ Tool programme, including industry challenges and successful YI experience on **student's events**
- Ensure active **web and social media pages**
- Organize motivation **workshops**, idea generation workshops or **hackathons**
- Create a database of other formal and informal education opportunities for highly talented students, and publicize and promote such opportunities nationally to parents, education professionals, and content and resource providers
- Support the expansion of computing and communications infrastructure to foster peer-to-peer connections and collaborations, and direct connections with the scientific research community

### **What should be presented?**

Clear communication of the idea of the program to the target group: they must see that this program is focused on the energy sector and its challenges, and communicate the values of the program itself. YIs participating to the motivational workshops must have a clear vision about the values they would get and hopefully will apply for the programme. To support motivation and engagement of YIs, success cases of startups in sustainable energy should be showcased. End of the workshop should be devoted to open discussion enabling YIs to share their ideas and visions for new solutions and ideas, helping to identify potential YIs for the Tool Pilot.

### **Benefits that motivational workshops will provide:**

- Announcement of the program that will take place in at least 9 European countries (Danube Energy + project partner's countries – presented at the Figure 7.)
- Clear communication of the value to YIs that would motivate them to apply;
- Video that will be played on video streaming services and sites as a promotional video.



*Figure 7. Danube Energy+ Project Partners' countries*

### 3.2.3. Connection

There is no set recipe for developing relationships within an ecosystem because it depends on the specifics of the technology, the cultures of the ecosystem entities, and the personalities of the players. Ecosystems that find ways to translate knowledge of discoveries developed in the academic community into a context that is relevant to the industry investors reduce the perceived risk for the investor so that he/she might be inclined to invest in the technology at an earlier stage (Jackson). Therefore, it is a good practice to invite other ecosystem actors, SME and industry representatives to co-create events for identification and motivation of YI as well as pre-acceleration programmes. The Tool has been developed jointly involving key partners' expertise and key stakeholder groups: public administration, SMEs, universities and business supporting actors. With the aim to make a strong relationships with other ecosystem actors the Tool should be implemented by inviting industry representatives and previously successful startups in the field to participate as mentors in the pre-acceleration programme. Demo day when YIs will be pitching their ideas will be organized to network with business angels and investors and to engage other interested ecosystem actors.

During the implementation of the Tool 5 events connecting YIs to key stakeholders in regional ecosystem should be organized. Each event should be organized for 2 YIs participating in the Tool and 4-5 guests from ecosystem who are interested for their idea. The aim of the connection events is to connect YIs participating in the Tool with experienced experts who will give them feedbacks and insights important for successful development of venture and provide ecosystem actors with good practice and increased knowledge of YIs interest and process.

### 3.3. Danube Energy + Tool

Danube Energy+ Tool is a pre-acceleration learning scheme targeting YIs with highly innovative disruptive ideas in energy efficiency field. The Tool consists of three learning blocks (presented in figure 8.) is designed to support YIs in pioneering change in the energy efficiency area by setting up highly innovative start-ups and to prepare start-ups for finalizing their commercialization plans. Target group are individuals with projects with specific industrial focus on innovative solutions addressing energy efficiency field that are still at the idea stage, but with no product, traction, or even a working prototype.

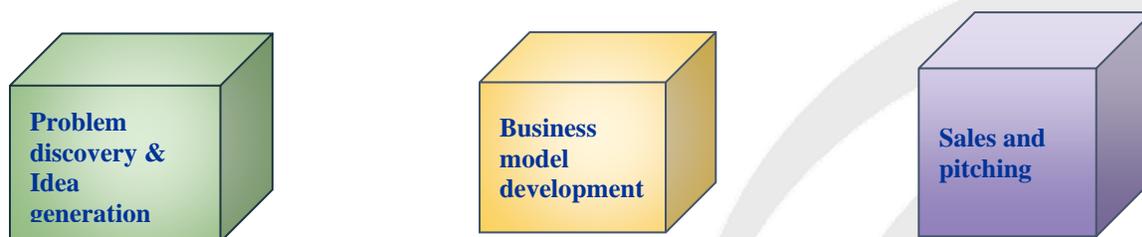


Figure 8. Danube Energy+ Tool learning blocks

The learning blocks are presented in the following structure:

<b>Theory sessions</b>	Theory sessions will be led by experts or entrepreneurs with prior experience in the industry.
<b>Workshops and coaching sessions</b>	Each team will be working on all topics and mentors or business coaches will be coaching teams during workshops
<b>Demo Day</b>	The Program ends with a Demo Day where all teams pitch their idea

The learning contents and materials for each of the learning blocks are provided in the document **Danube Energy+ Tool – Pre acceleration learning scheme for Young Innovators (Annex 1)**

### 3.3.1 Guidelines for implementing Tool into practice

The implementation of pre-acceleration programme (Tool) begins with an open call for applicants with the duration of one month. The number of participants (per batch) must not exceed 15 YI, so to be able to provide a quality learning experience. The Tool is structured in 40 hours of lessons and workshops and ends with a Demo day. The recommended duration of the Tool is 4 weeks, to be able to sustain the motivation of YI and allow for some free space in between the learning blocks. During the workshops, local languages can be used, but pitch decks for the Demo Day, should be prepared and presented in English, to prepare YI for contacts with international partners. Participants have to sign attendance sheets per each day of workshops and for Demo day. After the Demo day providers of the Tool have to prepare a report with the list of participants to be able to evaluate the programme and implement changes where necessary. Additionally, each team should deliver their Pitch Deck to the organizer who can then use it to help connect YIs with other ecosystem actors. Attendance sheets and photos of workshops and Demo day should be made also to provide information for the programme's evaluation and further financing and implementation.

Before the Open Call is announced, METHODOLOGY FOR THE OPEN CALL PROCEDURE, EVALUATIONS AND SELECTION will be defined and provided in separate document. Methodology will include information on evaluation criteria evaluators' selections process of ranking applicants.

### 3.3.2. Branding – communication materials

The pre-acceleration program (the Tool) is developed through implementation of Interreg Danube Energy+ project and is thus named *Danube Energy+*. Branding needs to be present throughout the program implementation. Therefore, logo Interreg Danube Energy + needs to be included in presentation materials and all other communication channels. Some organizational requirements related to branding and visibility are listed below.

#### Social media

Danube Energy+ has three social media accounts:



[@Danube Energy+](#)



[@DanubeEnergyPlus](#)



[Danube Energy Plus](#)

Each Tool provider has the responsibility to popularize the social media accounts and it should be done in the following ways:

- **Sharing the social media pages** through their network (e.g. sharing the Danube Energy+ Facebook page on each organization's page).
- **Sharing posts.** When the news related to the Program implementation are posted on social media pages, it is very strongly advisable that Program providers share the post through their organizations' pages, especially when the post is related to a local activity (e.g. a local event). This is important in particular for the social media campaign to attract YIs.

In addition to sharing existing posts, the project partners can share posts on their own pages, however they must use the hashtags and provide links to the Danube Energy+ pages/website: <http://www.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/danube-energy>

When sharing posts, the following hashtags should be used: #DanubeEnergyPlus or #DanubeEnergy+

In Twitter, when posting news related to Danube Energy+, @Interreg\_Danube must be used, as the Interreg\_Danube profile often shares posts they have been tagged in.

## ANNEXES

Supportive training workshop materials attached to this document are listed below:

1. Danube Energy+ Tool (pdf) – *Pre acceleration learning scheme for Young Innovators*
2. Logo of Interreg Danube Energy + (png)
3. Brochure of Danube Energy+ (pdf ready for print 99x210)
4. Animation video - dynamic presentation of industry challenge (available at the [LINK](#))