ASKFOOD – Alliance for Skills and Knowledge to Widen Food Sector-related Open Innovation, Optimization and Development

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Deliverable D4.4

Specifications of selected acceleration initiatives

PART 1

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Dissemination Level		
PU	Public	
PP	Restricted to other programme participants (including Commission services and projects reviewers)	
CO	Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including EACEA and Commission services and projects reviewers)	**X**

Summary:

This deliverable reports the list of selected activities with targets, outcomes and impacts, methods, layout and exponential development plan.

As initiatives are ongoing and will be implemented also in M19-M36 (Reversed Incubator, Garage Labs), an updated version of this deliverable will be made available to complement the current information and materials available.

Thus, this deliverable represents a version 1 which will be updated and provided as version 2.

1 Table of Contents

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1. Work Package 4 : the Reversed Incubator Approach

This work package and its task are aimed to:

(1) Improve industry-oriented professional skills of students, teachers and industry professionals and integrate science and technology skills into industry by investing in an open ecosystem to connect and contaminate talents, ideas and entrepreneurial initiatives to multiply the value of the entire value chain of the food-related sectors;

(2) Support an industry-driven generation of innovative start-ups

(3) Connect the resources and the ideas generated in WP1 and WP2 into an innovative platform that supports the entrepreneurial generativity and new models to re-think and do business;

The ASKFOOD reversed incubator approach inverts the traditional approach to generate business as it designs and develops start-ups starting from the needs/opportunities of innovation expressed by enterprises. These companies provide certain financial resources, knowledge of the market and the presence of distribution channels, so start-ups can operate from the beginning within the logic of satisfying the first customer. The "reversed" logic promotes a virtuous and sustainable system that brings the talents and research to the market and move them away from the vicious logic in which they would fall if they followed models that rely mainly on finance to drive the growth of start-ups.

2 The Reversed Incubator Approach

In the ASKFOOD project, the "reverse incubation" will be implemented as innovative approach to reinforce innovation capabilities, and to up-skill both professionals from industry and talents from university by adopting disruptive training solutions.

To get the proper spirit of this approach, two are the main aspects to be constantly kept on mind:

a) the project per sé doesn't play the role of business incubators or start-up accelerators (even if we intend to share resources and methodologies with them): the main aim of ASKFOOD is not the creation of new companies but the exploration of approaches that can support the effectiveness both of entrepreneurial education within the universities and the innovation in traditional university-industry cooperation in food and food-related sectors;

b) ASKFOOD is focused on skills and on how different interactions between professionals, researchers, universities and talents impact on skills: the "plug and play" approach is aimed at defining new schemes for training that can produce positive impact on the shift from a "lifelong learning" focus to a "lifelong employability" strategy in the food sector.

Three are the main stages to implement the reverse incubation approach that connect task 4.1. and task 4.3. and will require in the next future a discussion about how to integrate and relate these activities with the Garage Labs (task 4.2). Task 4.2. should be started simultaneously and go on in parallel, with the idea to activate researchers as university spin-offs promoters.

During the project meeting in Cyprus (April 2019) a wide discussion with task leaders and all the partners occurred to explore the common methodologies and common aims of the two paths that WP 4 foresees to support innovation skills.
The Reversed Incubator approach requires for its implementation the three core steps here below described and overall depicted in Figure 1:

step 1: selection of the **food companies** to be involved. The companies will be assessed and accompanied in their innovation strategies so to identify the ground on which we can start the talent selection. In paragraph 1 and paragraph 2 the two tools (the Company profiling toolkit and the Innovation Check-Up Grid) used to support this stage are illustrated.

step 2: selection of the **talents** and creation of the working teams to incubate as potential start-ups to manage the most effective response to the untapped innovation potential expressed by the companies, that we identified in step 1, The difference between a traditional Open Innovation Challenge and the Reverse Incubator model is that we will organize teams of talents and support and incubate them to create new start-ups with some pre-defined clients and a "captive" market represented by the company who will adopt the team and use it as a sort of "corporate startup";

step 3: activation of the reverse incubation path that includes also the definition of documents to protect IPR issues among participants (*Non Disclosure Agreements*) and any other document of the Reverse Incubation

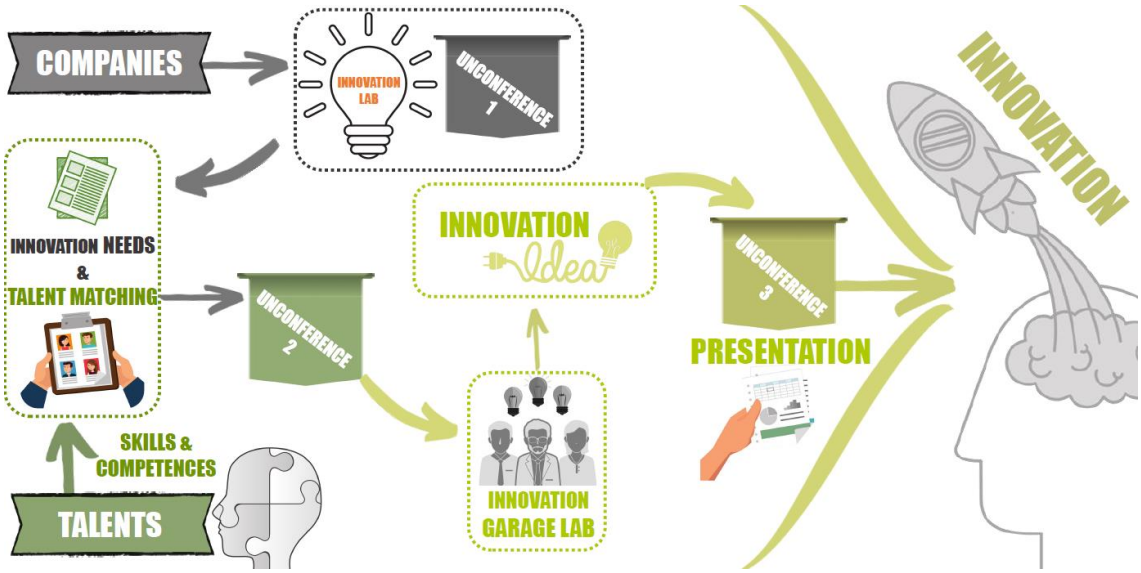


Figure 1: The reverse incubator approach - steps

This process is currently under piloting and evaluation in Italy (pilot Reverse Incubator), started in February 2019 with the preliminary meetings, organization of events (Reverse Incubator unconference), selection of talents, identification of companies and challenges, training of the talents, under the lead of Cassiopea and in collaboration with University of

Teramo. To set up and verify the entire process, we activated a network of 39 Universities and 10 Incubators that will launch the call and support us in the generation of the talent portfolio to feed the Talent and Idea Marketplace and to start the team building among selected talents.

In the following chapters, the documents prepared and the materials developed during the different steps already implemented

3 Stage 1: how to manage preliminary activities with companies to be involved

The business incubation, in our approach, doesn't start with the selection of potential start-ups but supports the creation of "on-demand" start-ups by matching un-explored innovation needs of food and food-related companies and young talents from academia, who will be supported in setting up a newco that will play the role of "external provider" of innovation for the companies. In this sense, we used the expression of "plug and play" to describe the interaction between the consolidated company and the incubated startups.

One of the methodological option of our project is to consider newly created start-ups, who have already been active on the market for two/three years, among the potential demanders of skills and external innovation.

In this perspective, the first idea we tried to focus is how to identify a cluster of companies to be involved in the reverse incubation process that can be considered a significative and representative sample to generalize the evidences and the conclusion we will get from the adoption of the reverse incubation as a model.

Table 1. (The Reversed Innovation Panel) is the grid used to map and cluster the companies that will be involved in the reverse incubation in Italy. The idea is by the end of the project to have at least one company for each box in the table.

All the companies included in the panel **were pre-filtered** by considering four aspects:

a) ***Reverse Innovation perception*** (this will be further detailed in paragraph 2 but can expressed as a will to innovate and to invest on open innovation, joined with a consciousness of not having enough of internal resources – time, competencies, organisational model – to man innovation internally)

b) Company size and maturity

c) ***Relative ease to React and to Cooperate*** with the ASKFOOD Project

d) ***Potential to act as Multiplier Agent/ Ambassador of the Project and of the Reverse Incubation Approach*** (i.e. being part of a cluster; being a promoter of Open Innovation Challenge; being a member of an EU or international Network or Alliance)

A first list of companies was created to calibrate the panel according to the grid in table 1, and, then, to start contacting individually each company. As already mentioned in Italy we started working together Cassiopea and UNITE as well as FEDERALIMENTARE so to define a country-level methodology, that can be further exploited in the other partner countries.

Table 1a. The Reverse innovation panel. A grid to map and generated a representative sample for the testing of the Reverse Incubation approach.

Maturity stage Classification criteria	**Consolidated company**	**Start-up company**
Business size		
Small		
Medium		
Large		
Position in the value chain		
Production		
Transformation		
Logistics		
Distribution		
Consumption		
Marketing		
Other Services (Specify)		
Type of innovation need		
Food technology related		
IOT/4.0 Food Industry		
Food Science related		
Internationalization related		
Market and consumption related		
New Product		

Even if a single company can be related to more than one aspect, the idea is to have just one box selected for each company. This can be obtained by considering the result of the company profiling, that is supported by the tool presented in paragraph 2. The final result of the table for the present State-of-the-Art for selected companies in Italy is reported below (Table 1b).

Table 1b. The Reverse innovation panel for the first group of Italian companies to be involved in the reversed incubation.

Maturity stage **Classification criteria**	**Consolidated company**	**Start-up company**
Business size		
Small	Venissa(Veneto)	
Medium	Pascucci Caffè (Marche)	
Large	Gruppo Italiano Vini (Veneto) Granarolo (Emilia Romagna)	
Position in the value chain		
Production	Girolomoni (Marche)	Frolla Microbiscottificio (Marche)
Transformation	Donnafugata (Sicilia)	
Logistics	Gruppo Italiano Vini (Veneto)	
Distribution	Il Melograno (Emilia Romagna)	Belladentro (Lombardia) Sood (Campania)
Consumption		
Marketing		Intravino (Toscana)
Other Services (Specify)		WoopFood (Crowdfunding)
Type of innovation need		
Food technology related	Gastronomia Toscana (Toscana)	
IOT/4.0 Food Industry		XLVI (Marche)
Food Science related	Nuben (Abruzzo)	
Internationalization related	Caseificio Iemmo (Campania)	
Market and consumption related	Pastificio Dal Verde (Abruzzo)	
New Product		Nutrinsect (Marche)

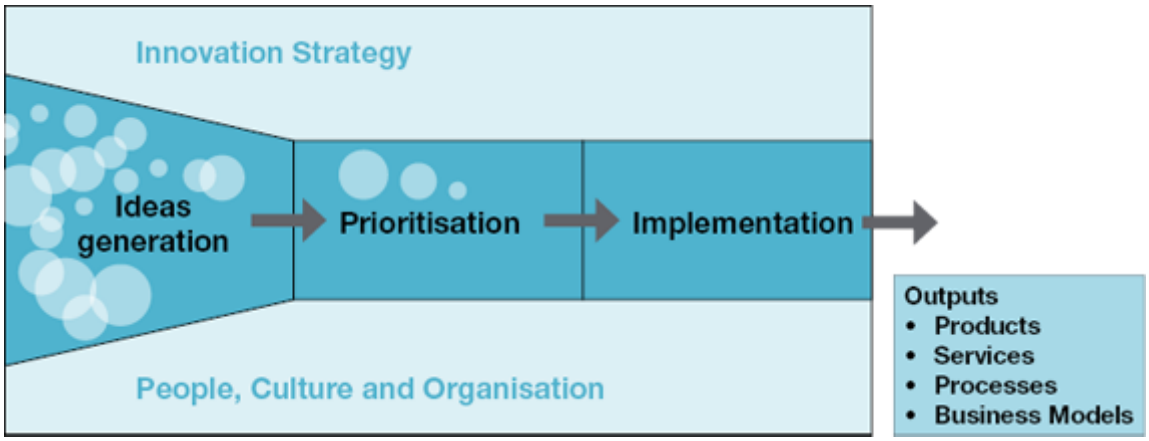
Each selected company is classified so to highlight its main interest in the reversed incubation. Where only the size is indicated, it means that there is not yet a clear need and a further analysis has to be carried on.

4 Stage 2: the design of the specifications for the selected acceleration initiatives

The definition of the selected acceleration initiatives was made by using the Innovation Check Up Grid, that the WP Leader designed with the support of the associated partners representing incubators/accelerators and future curators with a dedicated focus on the food sector

The innovation check-up grid is a tool to understand how effective an organisation is at managing innovation and where is some room to implement reversed incubation.

The main questions are structured around the Pentathlon Framework, developed by Keith Goffin at Cranfield School of Management (UK), that classifies innovation into outputs (such as products, services, processes, and business models) and five aspects of innovation management: strategy; ideas generation; prioritisation; implementation; and people, culture and organisation (see figure here below).



The grids used for collecting the info from the companies with whom the first contact was made is reported in the following pages, that correspond to the text reported in a dedicated form distributed to the companies by email after the first meeting.

FORM 1. THE INNOVATION GRID TO SUPPORT THE SPECIFICATIONS FOR SELECTED INCUBATION INITIATIVES

Please use the scales below to evaluate the following sentences

A. Innovation strategy section

Our top management meet specifically to define innovation policy and to support innovation investment decisions.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Perception										
Importance										

Our main innovation strategy is clear (for example, first-to-market or fast follower).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Perception										
Importance										

We have a clear/specific definition of innovation that is shared throughout the business.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Perception										
Importance										

We actively monitor our operating environment to identify key trends and market drivers (for example demographics, legislation, changing needs, new technology, etc.).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Perception										
Importance										

Our innovation strategy integrates all five areas of innovation management (ideas, prioritisation, implementation, people and strategy)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Perception										

Importance										

What should top management do to make the innovation strategy clearer and more effective? (open question)

B. Ideas section

The general climate within all of our departments and functions is supportive of the process of generating ideas.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Perception										
Importance										

We take the opportunity to learn from and share experiences with other organisations ("open innovation").

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Perception										
Importance										

We use structured problem solving approaches (such as brainstorming, TRIZ, scenario development, etc.).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Perception										
Importance										

We actively research, identify and capture customers' stated and latent (hidden) needs.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Perception										
Importance										

Within our industry we are perceived to be a creative organisation

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Perception										
Importance										

What should be done to improve the pipeline of ideas generation in our organisation? (open question)

C. Prioritisation section

We have a specific system (as opposed to ad-hoc arrangements) for screening and evaluating ideas in the organisation.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Perception										
Importance										

Our portfolio prioritisation process clearly links the choice of projects to our innovation strategy.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Perception										
Importance										

We use both financial and scoring methods effectively and efficiently to evaluate our innovation projects.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Perception										
Importance										

We have a clear and shared understanding of innovation risk - this allows us to objectively analyze projects.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Perception										

Importance										

Our current portfolio is balanced (i.e. projects align with innovation strategy, they maximise value, and make the most efficient use of resources).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Perception										
Importance										

What should be done to ensure the right projects are prioritised by our organisation? (open question)

D. Implementation section

We have a systematic new product or new service development process. The steps are integrated and activities take place in parallel with each other.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Perception										
Importance										

We are able to ensure that customer and end user input is used throughout the process.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Perception										
Importance										

We ensure that sufficient capacity is available in R&D, manufacturing, suppliers and support functions to allow fast and effective product development.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Perception										
Importance										

We have a long-term (business) champion for each new product,new services, process and business model.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Perception										
Importance										

Our record of new products and services is satisfactory when compared with our main competitors.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Perception										
Importance										

Which is the main focus to be considered?

(list the value chain component and rank for each)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Perception										
Importance										

Which are the core sources of innovation to be considered in the next 3 to 5 years?

(list the type of related innovation according to table 1 and rank)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Perception										
Importance										

What should be done to improve the way our organisation develops new products, new services, processes and business models? (open question)

E. People and organisation section

Management actively creates and sustains a culture of innovation.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Perception										

Importance										

Our mission statement mentions 'creativity', 'innovation' or both as being part of the corporate ethos.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Perception										
Importance										

Our employees' innovative and entrepreneurial behaviour is encouraged, recognised and/or rewarded.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Perception										
Importance										

We set aside budget and actively encourage training for staff in innovation-related activities.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Perception										
Importance										

We have a budget set aside for "blue sky" innovation projects - and/or we have a dedicated team working on innovation.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Perception										
Importance										

We cooperate with startups in innovation projects

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Perception										

Importance										

We cooperate with external talents in innovation projects

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Perception										
Importance										

We cooperate with universities in innovation projects

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Perception										
Importance										

We cooperate with incubators/accelerators in innovation projects

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Perception										
Importance										

We cooperate with private/public innovation agencies in innovation projects

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Perception										
Importance										

What should be done to improve the "culture of innovation" in our organisation? (open question)

E. Innovation output section

New products and/or new services generate a significant amount of our total revenues.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Perception										
Importance										

We have introduced one or more new business models to the market in the last three years.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Perception										
Importance										

Our products and services are made more competitive through our process innovations.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Perception										
Importance										

We are recognised in our markets to be a leading innovator.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Perception										
Importance										

We are achieving significant growth through innovation.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Perception										
Importance										

What should be done to increase innovation output in our organisation? (open question)

The Innovation Check-Up Grid will be supported by a desk analysis managed through an innovation audit. An innovation audit looks at a number of issues to see what is working well and what is impeding innovation in the company.

It asks analytical questions like these:

1. How many new products and services did we launch last year and how does this compare to the ideal?
2. How long does it take an idea to go from initial approval to full implementation?
3. What proportion of our revenues comes from products or services launched in the last two years?
4. How effective is our idea generation programme? How many ideas are we generating?
5. How healthy is our new product pipeline? What is the forecast value of developments in the pipeline?
6. How many ideas per employee are submitted and how many are approved?
7. What resources in terms of people, time and money are we allocating to innovation?

In addition to numerical and analytical questions the audit should examine softer issues. In depth interviews with a sample of people from different departments and levels will reveal much about the culture. Typical discussion points centre around questions like these:

1. To what extent are people empowered to try out new ideas?
2. Do we recognise and reward risk taking?
3. Do we blame people for failure when initiatives do not succeed?
4. Can people challenge company policy or the decisions of the boss?
5. Are we complacent or entrepreneurial?
6. Do we deliberately look outside for ideas?
7. Do departments openly collaborate on projects?
8. What is stopping us from implementing more ideas quickly?

The audit should also examine the idea approval process. How many hurdles does a proposal have to clear to get approved? How many people are involved? Flow diagrams of the theoretical and real approval processes need to be generated and examined. Is the approval process fit for purpose? Can small ideas get through or do they have to go through the same approvals as major initiatives? And so on. These aspects will be analysed during on-site/in-company visits or during the Reverse Incubation Open Days.

An additional result of this first contact with the companies is to get their insight regarding two open questions:

a) **Type of innovation** which they would like to be supported for (i.e. technological, scentifical, organizational, commercial)

b) **Type of talents/skills** which they wold like to have as external support (i.e. age, core competences, basic skills, background, gender, character)

The recorded data will build up the enterprise profile that will be collected in the enterprises'portfolio (D 4.1.) At project scale, when we will complete the collection and the analysis of the innovation grids, we will finally organize the results in the map reported in Figure 1.

The map will be used also to monitor and evaluate the impact of the reversed incubation on the following dimensions

- **Innovation strategy:** to what extent is there a clear, effective and communicated innovation strategy?

- **Idea generation:** to what extent is there a positive, collaborative approach to generating customer focused ideas?

- **Prioritisation:** to what extent are the most appropriate ideas selected for implementation?

- **Implementation:** to what extent are ideas quickly and successfully implemented?

- **People and organisation:** to what extent is there a culture of innovation?

- **Output:** to what extent are the number of new products and services developed sufficient?

Figure 2. The impact map to monitor the reversed incubation effect on the selected cluster of companies

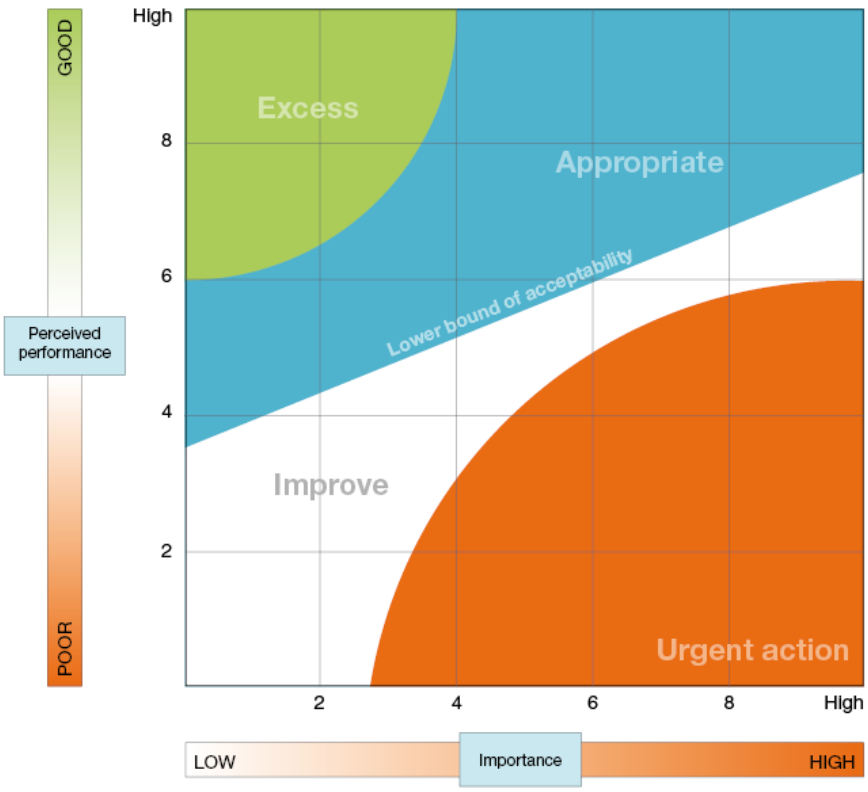


Figure 2. The impact map to monitor the reversed incubation effect on the selected cluster of companies

5 The meeting with the companies: the Reverse Incubator Unconference

In order to network and present the initiative to the companies Cassiopea and UniTE have involved in the activity, an informal event (Reverse incubator Unconference) has been organized on 13th March 2019, in Ancona.

The event included a presentation of the ASKFOOD project (P. Pittia, UNITE), a presentation of the Reversed incubator approach, and a series of small presentation on innovation and innovation challenges. Thereafter, the event was ended with a presentation of each companies and launch of the innovation challenges and needs.

Companies were invited to participate at the event by email with dedicated leaflet (Figure 3a); a poster was also created for the event (Figure 3b). Overall 13 companies belonging to the different categories and located in 4 different Italian regions (Toscana, Emilia Romagna, Abruzzo, Marche) attended to the event (Figure 4 and 5).

Figure 3a

Figure 3b

Figure 4

Figure 5

After the event, companies were contacted to fill in the questionnaire and send their specific challenges.

6 The final matching with talents and the joint construction of the Individual detailed action Plan

In Italy, we decide to cooperate with the CLAB Network (http://clabitalia.it/network), a network of 19 Universities investing in innovation capabilities of young talents.

Starting from the need analysis and innovation check-up made with the selected enterprises, a challenge will be formulated and vehiculated through calls in all the partner universities.

The first round of selection started in June 2019. Calls and materials are in national language following the specific rules of the Italian Contamination Labs; but overall the process was the following:

a) A call, usually funded by a university initiative that recognizes credits to students, is launched. At the first stage, students can apply by presenting themselves and their proposed solution to the challenge in a visual way no longer than 3 min or 5 slides;

b) Best ideas and best profiles are assessed by a Commission, locally based and invited for a one-to-one interview

c) The selected talents are invited at the second stage of the selection procedure, where they have to mix and match their individual proposals and to work on teams to generate a pitch that is presented to the enterprises

d) The enterprises choose their teams and the reverse incubation approach will start, trying to support the creation of a tailor-made start-up company that can resolve/manage the innovation issue for the company.

A similar strategy will be tested by involving co-working spaces and incubators.

NDAs and a detailed action plan is defined together with the hub-company that originated the challenge (see annexe 1). The same is for the materials we used to manage the first meeting according to the FORTH methodology involving companies and selected talents at the Unconference.

7 Ongoing and Next steps

The Pilot text of the reverse incubator in Italy is currently ongoing and it is planned to end by January 2020 with a dedicated event (place and time to be defined).

It is planned that all the materials and the approach will be transferred to the partners to launch at local level a similar call to test the innovation approach in their countries. It is expected that a second round of the reversed incubator will be organised also in Italy in collaboration with FEDERALIMENTARE.

8 Acknowledgments

This deliverable was completed in the framework of the implementation of the project ERASMUS+ KA ASKFOOD “Alliance for Skills and Knowledge to Widen Food Sector-related Open Innovation, Optimization and Development” | Project Number 588375-EPP-1-2017-1-IT-EPPKA2-KA.

This assignment was completed by CASSIOPEA sas, under the lead of Germana Di Falco, and University of Teramo, along with all the other partners of the project. The production of this report would not have been possible without the efforts of the many stakeholders and associated partners that we have interviewed and surveyed. The authors would like to express their gratitude to all of them.
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The report is supported and additional information will be made available in the public pages of WP4 and in the intranet (only for partners, restricted) project website www. www.askfood.eu

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