

Business Incubation Scene in the Pandemic Through an Open Innovation Approach – Latvia Case Study

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of Open Innovation (OI) is recognised by researchers and practitioners internationally, but research on business incubation and incubators as OI partners promoting co-creation, collaboration, co-petition is missing the explanation of how OI in a pandemic transforms business incubation. Business incubators (BIs) are defined as a tool “to help small start-ups overcome liabilities of newness and smallness” (Vanderstraeten et al., 2020). The research aims to investigate the actual business incubation situation in Latvia in the pandemic with the focus on the OI approach. What is the business incubation scene in a pandemic? This remains the research question, addressing the hypothesis – the pandemic facilitated changes in national incubation promoting online co-creation, co-petition and collaboration.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The Latvian business incubation scene was the main research field of the postdoctoral research project “Open Innovation”. Descriptive analyses of various incubator types in Latvia were performed, identifying the types of incubators including the University, industry and state-run incubators, incubation services and requirements. The content analyses of the co-occurrence of key services were conducted by mapping the incubation service area. The research period was during the pandemic time of 2021, when several socialisation restrictions came into force in Latvia, thus, shifting incubation online.

RESULTS

The pandemic facilitated changes in the national incubation system, promoting online co-creation, co-petition and collaboration in the business incubation field offering online nature services to tenants. External online expertise, as well as online mentoring support, were the OI outside-in strategy activities offered to tenants.

DISCUSSION

The incubation requirements regarding tenants' recruitment still differ in Latvia, offering the incubation from the idea stage to real time performance, and work in business incubators was on-going even in the pandemic. The nature of services switched to on-line and distance incubation, addressing the basic needs of tenants. The future research could focus on the further elaboration of measurement between the impact of on-site and on-line services on tenants' performance.

CONCLUSION

The description of the national incubation scene during the pandemic is both a theoretical and practical novelty of this research, as this was the first time in the Latvia business incubation field when on-site services were restricted due to the pandemic. This research proved the importance of the business incubation function in entrepreneurship support and the ability of incubators to provide this function on-line.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This research was conducted within the project “Open Innovation, No. 1.1.1.2/VIAA/3/19/426” funded by the Post-doctoral Research Support Aid programme of Latvia.

KEYWORDS: Open innovation, Business incubation

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