Declaração da Autoria do trabalho

Declaro ser o autor deste trabalho, que é original e inédito. Autores e trabalhos consultados estão devidamente citados no texto e constam da listagem de referências incluída.

Declaration of Authorship of work

I hereby declare, that I am the author of this work, which is original and unpublished. Authors and works consulted are properly cited in the text and included in the list of references included.

CONTENTS

Page

LIST OF TABLES

Page

LIST OF FIGURES

Page

LIST OF ACRONYMS

KBC	Knowledge-Based Companies
GEM	Global Entrepreneurship Monitor
EIBT	Knowledge-Based Companies
SUDOE	South-western Europe
R&D	Research and Development
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
BIC	Business Innovation Centres
UBI	University Business Incubators
IPI	Independent Private Incubators
CPI	Corporate Private Incubators
BICS	Association of Business and Innovation Centres
EBN	European Business Network
TII	Technology Innovation International
AIPQR	Association of Petrochemical, Chemical and Refining Industry
IASP	International Association of Science Parks
UTEN	University Technology Enterprise Network

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RESUMO

O meu estágio decorreu no Tecnopolo de Sines, uma incubadora de empresas situada em Sines, Portugal. Incorporei a equipa do Projeto EIBT-SUDOE, um projeto a realizar pelo Sines Tecnopolo no âmbito de uma cooperação transnacional com entidades semelhantes de Espanha e de França, cujos objetivos principais compreendem a promoção do desenvolvimento de empresas baseadas no conhecimento na região sudoeste da Europa; a promoção da inovação através do desenvolvimento de redes estáveis de cooperação em tecnologia; e a melhoria da sustentabilidade para a proteção e preservação da natureza e do ambiente do SUDOE.

Os meus objetivos individuais no âmbito deste projeto visavam contribuir para o desenvolvimento do conhecimento sobre o empreendedorismo tecnológico na região do Alentejo. Em particular, as minhas tarefas incluíam a elaboração de um diagnóstico acerca da situação das empresas baseadas no conhecimento existentes na região do Alentejo e um diagnóstico acerca do ambiente empresarial na região. Este diagnóstico descreve o contexto económico, políticas de apoio, entidades que influenciam o ambiente e inclui uma análise interna do estado atual das empresas locais. Foram recolhidos dados secundários a partir das publicações existentes e dados primários através de um questionário *on-line* realizado junto das empresas baseadas no conhecimento.

Os resultados do diagnóstico foram partilhados com todos os parceiros do Projeto EIBT-SUDOE. As conclusões e os dados recolhidos serão utilizados para a elaboração de um guia metodológico que irá propor um novo modelo de cooperação entre investigadores, empresários, executivos, investidores, gestores de incubadoras de empresas e responsáveis pelas políticas públicas de apoio ao empreendedorismo inovador.

Palavras-chave: incubação de empresas, empresas baseadas no conhecimento, ambiente empresarial, políticas de apoio.

ABSTRACT

During my internship at the Sines Tecnopolo, a business incubator located in Sines, Portugal, I became a part of the team responsible for the Project EIBT-SUDOE. The project – a transnational cooperation for the development of Knowledge-Based Companies (KBC) in south-western Europe (SUDOE) has the following objectives: to promote the development of KBC in the region of SUDOE, to promote innovation through the development of stable networks of cooperation in technology, and to improve sustainability for the protection and preservation of the natural environment in the SUDOE.

My individual objectives were to contribute to the development of knowledge on technological entrepreneurship in the Alentejo region of Portugal. My responsibilities included the preparation of a diagnosis on the current situation of the KBCs in Alentejo and a diagnosis of the entrepreneurial environment in the region. This study described the economic context, supportive policies, influencing entities and the current state of the local companies. I collected secondary data from the existing statistical databases and primary data through an on-line survey.

Outcomes of the entrepreneurial environment diagnosis and the KBCs diagnosis were passed to all other partners of the EIBT-SUDOE Project. The data collected and the conclusions will be used for the development of a methodological guide that will propose a new model of cooperation between researchers, entrepreneurs, executives, investors, managers of business incubators and public policy makers aimed at supporting innovative entrepreneurship.

Keywords: business incubation, knowledge-based companies, entrepreneurial environment, supportive policies.

Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION

The main objective of this report is to describe my internship activities at an incubation centre, Sines Tecnopolo, in Sines, Portugal, between June and September 2011.

The internship process began on June 1, 2011, with an interview with my supervisor, Tiago Santos, the executive director of Sines Tecnopolo. When my application was approved, I had an interview with Rui Nunes (the Business Support Office Manager at Sines Tecnopolo) who was responsible for my internship at the institution.

According to the internship contract, I was not entitled to monetary or any another kind of remuneration. The incubation centre did not provide me with any financial benefits.

During my internship, Sines Tecnopolo had been participating in the EIBT SUDOE project. The abbreviation EIBT (as represented in Spanish, Portuguese, and French) means knowledge-based companies (from now on designated by KBC), and SUDOE comes from sudoeste (south-west in Portuguese), which refers to the scope of activity in south-western Europe:

- Portuguese Alentejo,
- Spanish Asturias, Basque Country and Navarre,
- French Aquitaine.

Figure 1.1 Map of SUDOE area and regions participating in the Project
Source: EIBT-SUDOE Partners (2012)

In the EU, commonly faced problems in R&D include the difficulties involved in transforming research results into commercially viable innovations that lead to the formation of new economies. Recently, the number of activities for the promotion of businesses based on scientific and technological achievements has increased. In order to

improve the SUDOE network, these activities should involve advanced, efficient, and innovative methods. One of the project's objectives is to describe the characteristics and conditions of a regional framework for innovative and technological businesses.

The EIBT SUDOE project should result in the improvement of support systems for the creation and development of KBCs in SUDOE, significantly increase the creation and consolidation of new KBCs, and improve their integration in the economic fabric through transnational cooperation. The awareness regarding the R&D efforts carried out in SUDOE in recent years needs to be increased.

I was part of a diagnostic study on the condition of KBCs in the Alentejo region. During the internship, my tasks were in keeping with the objectives of the project. I was engaged in developing the regional diagnosis following a single methodology, which is common for all the regions participating in the project.

The study aimed to clarify the creation process of KBCs, difficulties faced by these companies, their level of development and growth, and their requirements for playing a significant role in the modernization of local production industries in SUDOE.

Finally, a methodological guide should be formulated based on this study. It should contain a combination of best practices for the creation and development of KBCs in the SUDOE area (based on the common model for the regions engaged in transnational cooperation). This guide will be one of the project's major outcomes; it will ensure that the study's findings are employed after project completion.

This report is organized and presented in seven chapters. The first chapter explains the basic concepts and objectives of the internship. The second chapter provides a brief description of the entrepreneurial environment and business incubators and their role in the development of KBCs. I also provide a general description of KBCs and research methodologies, statistical data representation, and analysis methods. Chapter 3 provides an insight into the structure and activities of Sines Tecnopolo, its objectives, and other entities affiliated for business promotion. Chapter 4 includes the road map and a description of the EIBT SUDOE project, key objectives, and expected outcomes. I also explain how different tasks were undertaken in different stages and the project initiatives that had to be included for the development of KBCs in the SUDOE area. The fifth chapter discusses the tasks entrusted to me, organization of my work plan, and my role during the internship. The sixth chapter contains my self-evaluation, critical

assessment, and the difficulties and experiences during my internship. The last chapter provides a conclusion and some guidance for students undergoing practical training.

Chapter 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Environmental conditions and entrepreneurial activity

Business environment is a support structure for business. Its influence can be clearly displayed on new enterprises mostly. It mostly influences in times of crisis when skilled labour, financial and organizational resources are difficult to get. In addition, private equity, grants, government support and educational programs help budding entrepreneurs overcome the obstacles in business promotion (Bowen & DeClercq, 2008).

The government is an interested party in drawing attention to the subject of entrepreneurship support through institutional structures. The creation of an enabling institutional environment is characterized by its impact on the dynamics of entrepreneurship in the country as a whole (Spencer & Gomez, 2004). Environment affects the quality of management, access to capital and other resources, as well as the perception of entrepreneurship (Acs, et al., 2008). Environment is a decisive factor in economic behaviour and impacts determining, which defines the prevalence of certain types of entrepreneurship in society (North, 1990). If the business exists in an environment where property rights, fair judicial system, enforcement of contracts, efficient mechanisms of taxation and regulation and low level of lobbying are guaranteed, people get the motivation to become entrepreneurs, creating new wealth through productive entrepreneurship (Baumol, 1990).

Until recently, the literature has been focused on macro-level analysis of the business environment (Acs, et al., 2008; Bowen & DeClercq, 2008), mostly linking the institutional aspects with the organizational performance. The new generation of research in the strategy and international management shows that institutions play a much more important role in the development of business environment and directly influence the strategy of companies, competitive capacity, performance and dynamics (Meyer, et al., 2009).

GEM as the world's largest study on entrepreneurship (54 participating economies) developed a conceptual model of the institutional environment and its impact on entrepreneurial activity (see Figure 2.1). This model displays two sets of conditions - essential requirements and efficiency enhancers - basic conditions that affect the functioning and well-being of society.

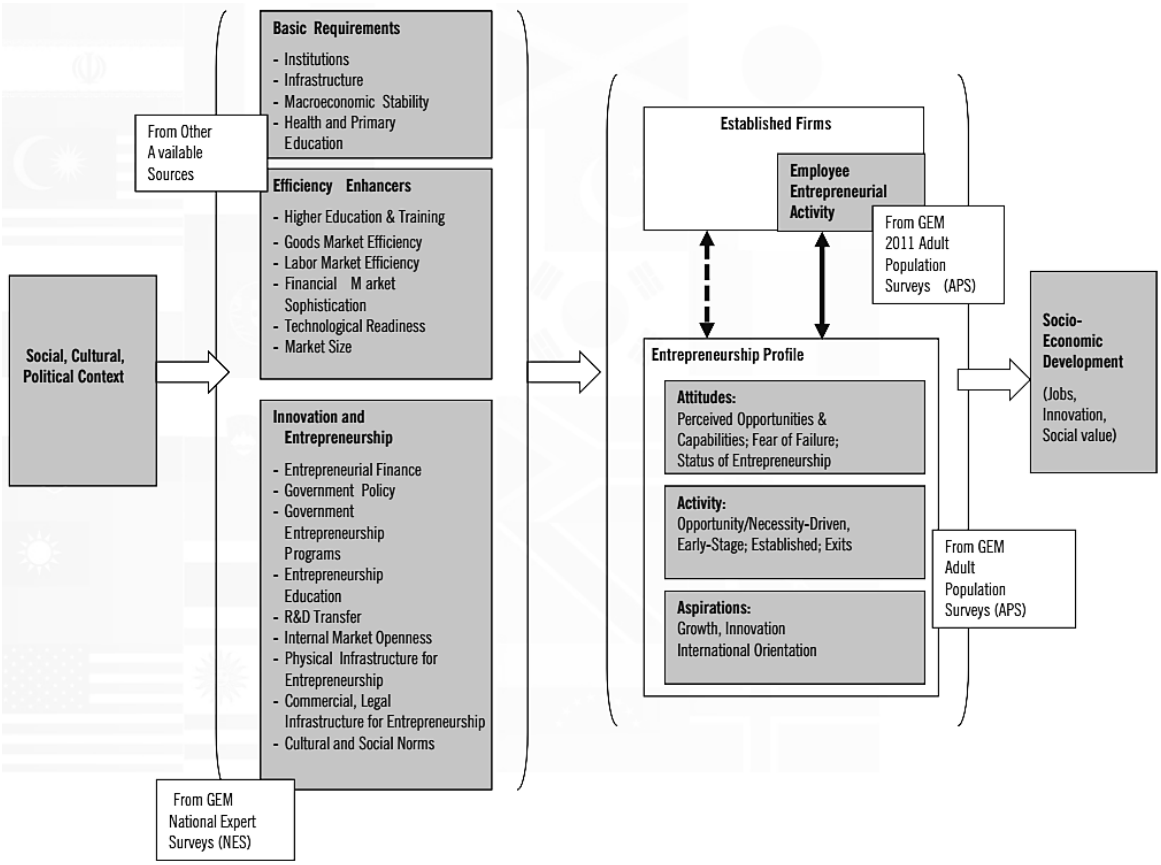

Figure 2.1 The Institutional Context and Its Relationship to Entrepreneurship
Source: Kelley et al. (2012)

These basic framework conditions for entrepreneurship are critical, because without a solid institutional framework the entrepreneurship-specific conditions cannot function effectively (Kelley, et al., 2012). The model shows nine entrepreneurial framework conditions:

1. Financial Support - availability of financial resources, equity and debt redemption funds to new and growing businesses, including grants and subsidies.
2. Government Policies - degree to which government policies relating to taxes, regulations and their application are neutral with respect to the size of firms and the degree to which these policies encourage or discourage new and growing businesses.
3. Government Programs - existence of programs at all levels of government (national, regional and municipal), which directly support new and growing businesses.
4. Education and Training - degree to which training on the creation, management or growth of new businesses is included in education and training, as well as the

quality, relevance and depth of education and training to create or manage small, new or growing businesses.

5. Transfer of Research and Development - degree to which R&D at national level leads to new business opportunities, as well as the level of access to R&D by small, new or growing businesses.
6. Market Openness / Barriers to Entry - degree to which it prevents the trade agreements and procedures are subjected to changes and substitutions, preventing new and growing companies to be in competition and replace suppliers and consultants on a recurring basis.
7. Access to Physical Infrastructure - access to physical resources (communication, transportation, utilities, raw materials and natural resources) at prices that are not discriminatory for small, new or growing businesses.
8. Infrastructure Commercial and Professional - the influence of institutions and business services, accounting and legal that allows the promotion of small, new or growing businesses.
9. Cultural and Social Norms - Degree to which the existing social and cultural norms encourage (or not discourage) the individual initiatives that lead to new ways of conducting business and economic activities and, in turn, contribute to a greater distribution of wealth and income.

National study on entrepreneurship from GEM Portugal (2010) suggests one more conditional constraint that should be added to this list: protection of intellectual property rights - the extent to which the law protects the intellectual property of new and growing companies and the extent to which it is applied.

Determinants of entrepreneurship are quite complex, describing the nature and the profile of entrepreneurship with bound variables is not clear. In this situation, the institutional environment is critical for the study of entrepreneurship, because it regulates the conditions in which entrepreneurs must develop their business and policy makers can make decisions.

2.2 Business Incubation

Business incubators are organizations, which provide assistance in the establishment of commercially viable products or services and efficient production based on innovative

ideas (Cumming, 2010). Business incubator solves the problem of supporting small, emerging enterprises and start-up entrepreneurs who want to, but do not have the opportunity to start a business (OECD, 1999). It fosters regional economic growth and develops the marketplace. Business incubators provide a variety of services to business clients outside the incubator as well as in-house:

- leasing non-residential premises of the business incubator with the option of shared equipment,
- technical operation of the building (part of the building) of a business incubator and other administrative services,
- postal and secretarial services,
- advisory on taxation, accounting, credit, legal protection, R&D and development of the enterprise, business and marketing planning,
- human resources development, counselling and training,
- access to information databases.

Business incubators can be mapped into four categories: Business Innovation Centres (BICs), University Business Incubators (UBIs), Independent Private Incubators (IPIs), and Corporate Private Incubators (CPIs) (Grimaldi & Grandi, 2005). These categories of incubators overlap the classification that considers funding sources for the support programs (OECD, 1999):

- sponsored by economic development organizations,
- governmental entities,
- universities,
- enterprises,
- research institutions,
- private investors,
- investment institutions.

Alternatively, other authors suggest their own classifications based on particular features of the incubators. Peters, Rice and Sundararajan (2004) explained three types of incubators distinguishing their stakeholder objectives and business models:

- non-profits, small incubators focused on diversifying the local economy,
- university based incubators, linked to universities,
- for-profit, private incubators.

Business incubators can be distinguished taking into consideration knowledge intensity of their projects and the industry sectors supported (OECD, 1999):

- "mixed-use" incubators, assisting a range of early-stage companies,
- focused on technology businesses,
- manufacturing firms,
- focused on service businesses, serve niche markets or assist other types of businesses.

According to the Hurley's (2002) development type classification, incubators can be classified by advantages of their facilities or available relations:

- Technology-based incubators represent the source of R&D for the next business generation cultivation and are often found in the high-tech industry-based or university-based environment.
- Geographically-based incubators are advancing because of the proximity to advantageous regions (either logistic or transportation matters).
- Economy-based incubators are established on the low-cost facilities (often subsidized) with the benefits of the principal services, such as distribution service, available.
- Supply-chain incubators often can be found in the proximity to a major employer, which will capture the most fruitful entrepreneurs as his suppliers.

One of the best features of the relations in the incubation process is that everybody benefits from the business support activities. Main beneficiaries of the incubation process are listed in the figure 2.2 - community, professionals, academic institutions and investors, all wining from their participation (OECD, 2003).

Figure 2.2 Benefits of the business incubation participants
Source: prepared by the author for this report

Incubators declare that their companies can seriously benefit from creating long-lasting and sound relations with the incubators' partners. Through their external partners, the ventures can easily and quickly access competencies that are not available in-house and that are indispensable for their business (OECD, 2003). These relations can enable them to speed up their business development cycles. On the other hand, external technological partners have incentives to share their knowledge with the ventures, because in some cases (depending on the nature of their intervention) they can get an equity stake or start a partnership with newly established companies (Grimaldi & Grandi, 2005).

The role of business incubators is not only limited to mediation between companies and universities or research centres. Business incubators have to provide a combination of the infrastructure and skilled services with networking and coaching that helps start-ups to improve their ability to innovate and survive in the business process (Soetanto, 2004). Business incubators should play an active role in networking among KBCs, universities, industry and government officials, and expand their services to increase the support. The potential entrepreneur in high-tech business can improve the potential of his firm development in case the incubator provides the three key elements of support efficiently: infrastructure, coaching and networking (Soetanto, 2004).

Incubators should assist in developing new technologies and products that can later be subjected to licensing as industrial property by trading partners or thrown into the

market economy by encouraged businesses (Aernoudt, 2004). If incubator does not provide new ventures with finance, it provides a support and consultancy to prepare an external business plan designed for potential investors, banks or projects in order to find the most appropriate way for financing the growing company (Cumming, 2010).

Culp (1990) suggested seven stages of the incubation development process (Figure 2.3).

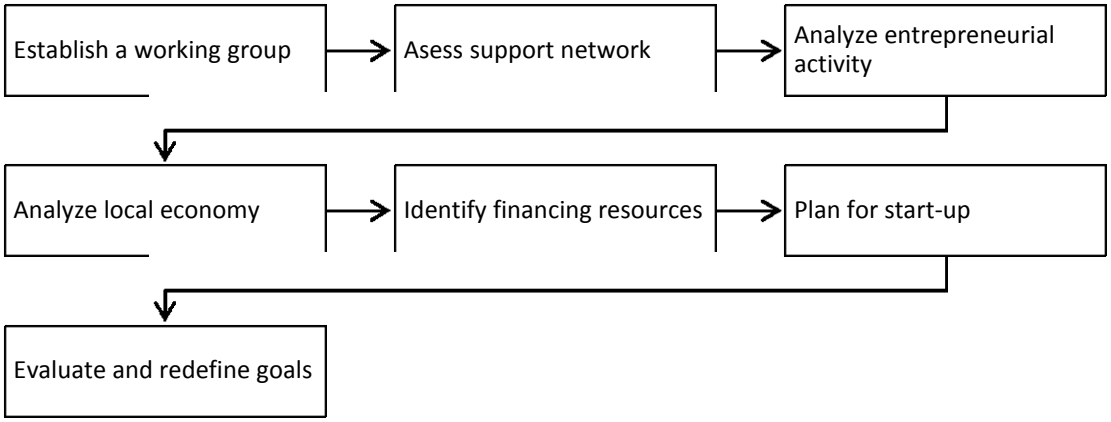

Figure 2.3 Stages of the incubation development process
Source: prepared by the author for this report

Following the development process described by Culp (1990) and based on a United States national study conducted in 1985, incubator is initiated by a working group first. Its tasks are defining goals and guidelines of the incubator's further development, setting duties and responsibilities among the members of the group. Assessing the support network helps to identify the potential sources of assistance, funding and support from local authorities. Next, the current level of entrepreneurial activity and the local market economy are analysed, providing an insight into the area and targeting activities. At the same time, sufficient financial resources should be arranged for the future incubated companies. Plan for start-up should include overall operational policies: entrance selection and graduation policies, leasing agreements and adequate staffing. Goals and objectives should be re-evaluated and redefined at the beginning of incubator's operation, to keep the organization flexible (Culp, 1990).

From Dechang's case study (2010) we can conclude which features of business incubators' operational model dominated among existing incubators 20 years before and do today (Figure 2.4). These changes are interrelated with the improvement in service capabilities and incubation effect.

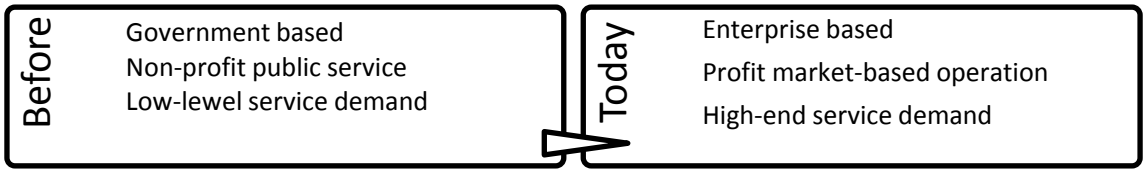

Figure 2.4 Changing features of business incubation
Source: prepared by the author for this report

Every entrepreneur can face barriers of different origins during his entrepreneurial activity:

1. Fayolle and Klandt (2006) concluded that the cultural origin represents obstacles that emerge when academic (research) and business interests meet. These obstacles have different completions, means of goal achievement and focuses – this is where decision making process can face difficulties.
2. Following Fayolle & Klandt (2006), the organizational barriers appear because of the lack of structural and systematic support for business-orientated activities, such as patent requests, incubation, procedural and technical support, advisory for business creation and growth. The organizational barriers prevent from implementing entrepreneurial activities.
3. The legal barriers can appear when someone takes advantage of scientific achievements or research outcomes in his entrepreneurial activities. More specifically, the legal barriers refer to laws regulating intellectual property rights, patents and conflicts of interests, and so on (Fayolle & Klandt, 2006).
4. The financial barriers refer to difficulties in searching for and managing the financial support. After all, most of the developing and high-tech companies are resource-challenged while implementing an entrepreneurial activity. Usually the challenge includes searching for sources of financing, venture capital, available programs of aid or grants (Fayolle & Klandt, 2006).

These four types of barriers prevent the emergence of new businesses and bring serious obstacles for entrepreneurs. Business incubators solve problems by creating the support for the emergence of such entrepreneurial initiatives in the course of the incubation process. Incubator management teams made of experienced individuals can bring their knowledge and competencies to the new ventures and struggle to overcome the challenges. These teams have significant insight in the areas where they act and are highly motivated to provide efficient service (Cumming, 2010).

Small incubator-supported companies have 50% failure rate during first 5 years (Culp, 1990), because of the number of barriers that resists the creation and development of new ideas and their transition to growing innovative companies. However, it is still better than the general enterprise rates (Olafsen & Khalil, 2009). The failure rate can be decreased if the incubation development processes are applied following the above-described Culp's (1990) conclusions.

Operation, development and network service capabilities can be evaluated in order to help to identify the service performance of a business incubator (Chen, 2011). These indicators can help incubator's investors to reduce the uncertainty during the decision-making process, as well as for managers of the incubator to assess the current state of service and plan the development goals. Moreover, with good balance of services at the incubator, entrepreneurs provided with the required resources and connections are expected to overcome the obstacles and become financially viable and freestanding (Lewis, 2005). Correspondingly, the number of companies graduated from the incubator can be used in its performance evaluation.

2.3 Knowledge Based Companies and Knowledge Based Entrepreneurs

The subject of EIBT-SUDOE Project is knowledge-based companies - a specific type of innovative organization, besides, there are other denominations for the companies with the same profile in the literature. The innovative companies constitute a significant part of the innovation process. The encouragement of the establishment and growth of innovative companies is one of the priorities in the policy of the European Union (European Parliament, 2000).

The third edition of Oslo Manual (European Parliament, 2000) presents the following guidelines for the definition of "innovative company":

- An innovative company status is a temporary classification.
- The innovative firm is the one that introduced an innovation (at least one) during the period of analysis.
- The innovation introduced by the company can be a new innovative product or a process, a new marketing method or an organizational change.
- The company needs to introduce such innovation that is new to the market or the world in order to be considered an innovator. Moreover, the innovation can be

considered as a radical or a breakthrough when there is a drastic change in the market or economic activity of the company.

Recently, the concept of innovation area has been expanded. The third edition of the Oslo Manual (OECD and EUROSTAT, 2005) which is being considered as a primary document about the world of innovation, defined four types of innovations: product innovations, process, organizational and marketing.

There is no clear definition of KBC in the literature, and authors (Butchart, 1987; Storey & Tether, 1996; Shearman & Burrell, 1988) are still arguing about restricting or widening its meaning. However, most of them agree on the business idea that KBCs embrace - technology or scientific results that are essential for a progress of the regions to be more competitive.

Some studies identify KBC on the degree of expenditure on R&D as a percentage of sales greater than 5% (Balkin, et al., 2000). Following further enhanced definitions, it becomes less significant since small companies often lack R&D structures, but tend to have highly-educated employees and can have big part of their assets in intellectual human capital instead (Milkovich, et al., 1991).

Business model of KBCs makes economies more dynamic, generates qualified jobs in sectors with great future prospects (biotechnology, nanotechnology, ICT, or renewable energies) and is actively encouraged by governments and development agencies (Westhead & Storey, 1997). Having a dynamic nature, the competition in these sectors is fuelled by continually changing cast, offered as a result of high investments in technological research (Santos, 2003).

Trying to exploit the market opportunities effectively and looking for competitive advantages KBCs apply new technologies to open up new market niches and, subsequently, become well established as sources of both competitiveness and employment creation (Oakey, 2010). Following the study of Licht and Nerlinger (1998) proportion of KBCs with exporting features of the customer base tends to be greater in comparison to other companies.

Considering location - the absolute number of companies in technology-intensive sectors is particularly high in large cities and agglomerations; Harhoff (1995) explains this by the presence of relatively strong R&D infrastructure or above-average supply of qualified staff, and advanced transportation links requirements.

Considering such companies as being created from an innovation and maintaining the innovative characteristics throughout their evolution, it is considered that their founders are entrepreneurs. In fact, a specific type of entrepreneur is designated as the knowledge-based entrepreneur (OECD, 2003). Thus, the knowledge-based entrepreneur plays a central role in the creation and development of innovative companies.

Dylan's study (1995) assigns knowledge-based entrepreneurs to four general types: "researcher", "producer", "user" and "opportunist" - corresponding to their previous organizational backgrounds.

Entrepreneurial intensity influences the results or outputs of the entrepreneurial process and would be composed mainly by a number of events and a level of entrepreneurship. It is associated with the level of innovation, opportunity, risk assumed and proactive position during the process (OECD, 2003).

The model of Morris, Sexton and Lewis (1994) defines the results of the entrepreneurial process. Considering this model, we can observe the entrepreneurial results and respective influences of the entrepreneurial intensity:

- new businesses
- value creation
- new products, services
- new methods
- new technologies
- profit / personal benefits
- employment, assets, revenue growth

2.4 Scientific methods applied for the internship tasks

All studies, as well as diagnoses, whether basic or applied, involve the scientific method - the way in which researcher uses knowledge and evidences to reach the objective conclusions about the investigated problem (Goodwin, 2009). Economic research is a branch of social scientific researches and it inherits scientific methods from its parent (Zikmund, 1997). In this case, it is the way we come to understand the economic phenomena. Therefore, I included the main guidelines and explanations for the scientific methods that I have been using in my work tasks. They are discussed in this

chapter further on and used to provide context for the internship report.

Research work may be classified as exploratory, descriptive, or causal (Zikmund, 1997). In my case, it is an applied descriptive study, which is also known as a statistical study. It describes data and characteristics about the society or phenomenon being studied and performing data analysis makes it possible to answer questions and gain insight into the problem. The purpose of descriptive study is to explain things, such as the development potential for innovative industries or the demographics and correlation between level of education and entrepreneurial initiatives in the region.

Descriptive research can be either quantitative or qualitative. There are three main types of descriptive methods: observational methods, case study methods and survey methods. It involves collecting data that describes events and then organizes, tabulates, depicts, and describes the data collection (Glass & Hopkins, 1984). My working tasks involved summarizing and interpreting the statistical data and questionnaire survey with data collection using quantitative methods of research. It was more appropriate to determine the extent of a subject, issue or phenomenon by quantifying the ratio of the corresponding statistics and making out the conclusions of it. For this reason, I studied the figures of employment and unemployment, the financial performance of the region and the state of the economy sectors.

The field of statistics considered for this part of my work is descriptive statistics, because I was working with a set of measurements within situations in which data description was my main objective. All these data are recorded by Portuguese statistic institutions and are available for public access. The main problem is in organizing, summarizing, and describing these data—that is, making sense of the data (Ott & Longnecker, 2008). Descriptive research often uses visual aids, such as graphs and charts to help the reader to understand the data distribution. Because the human mind cannot extract the full import of a large mass of raw data, descriptive statistics are particularly powerful in reducing the data to a manageable form (Glass & Hopkins, 1984).

After the relevant data has been collected, it should be organized, displayed, and examined by using various graphical techniques. As a rule, the data should be arranged into categories that are classified by the single measurement (Ott & Longnecker, 2008). The first and the simplest method is a pie chart, used to display the share of each value (each category of the variable) among the total number of measurements by

representing them as partitions of the circle. The next graphic technique is a bar chart that can describe each category of the variable depicted as a bar. The length of the bar represents the frequency or percentage of observations falling into each category (Kent, 2001). If more than one variable is visualized, each chart can be represented in a separate graph, or all together combined in one multivariate cluster of bars. This method is mostly used to compare the quantities of categories of measurements. The bar chart is normally more preferable to the pie chart because the human eye can judge the comparison of the bars lengths more accurately than angular measures of pie slices. However, pie charts in turn are more aesthetic and they clearly show the total for all slices adds up to 100 per cent (Kent, 2001).

The histogram is the most common graphical presentation of variables, which were summarized in the distribution of frequencies. It is visually similar to a bar chart, with the difference that the bars widths are equal to the category intervals and the heights are proportional to the number of measurements in the category (Shmoylova, 2002). Therefore, it represents the values that the variable takes and their frequency.

Line charts are useful when the number of categories in the measurements is great. In addition, such a chart is useful when you want to portray the nature or the general trend of events or phenomena. The lines are convenient for the depiction of multiple time series comparison, when you want to compare growth rates. At the same chart of this type, it is not recommended to put in more than three or four curves. Their great number could complicate the drawing, and line chart may lose visibility (Shmoylova, 2002). It should be mentioned that the important disadvantage of this chart type is the requirement to the scale of data – with sudden changes in some categories the scale should be reduced, and accuracy of mapping other "quiet" categories is deteriorated.

The advantage of charts over other types of statistical information illustration is that they allow you to make the logical conclusion of a large amount of data more quickly. The results of calculations performed in statistical software are entered in the tables. They are the basis for further analysis or for the preparation of statistical report.

After collecting and describing the environmental data, I had to start the determining and designing questions for the survey. The survey study should follow a generalized model of stages. The questions have to be constructed properly for the survey to be both reliable and valid. Questions to be written should be clear and easy to grasp. Another consideration when designing questions is whether to include open-ended, closed-

ended, partially open-ended, or rating-scale questions. Advantages and disadvantages can be found with each type.

Open-ended questions allow for a greater variety of responses from participants but are difficult to analyse statistically because the data must be coded or reduced in some manner. Closed-ended questions are easy to evaluate statistically, but they severely limit the responses that participants can create. Many researchers also prefer to use a Likert-type scale because it is incredibly easy to evaluate statistically (Jackson, 2011:94).

This is the most crucial step of survey design and can make it or break it; every single element of the survey must refer to its design or it will be totally flawed. If the research subject is too broad, too many questions have to be asked; if it is too narrow, it will not be able to investigate the subject thoroughly.

After that, a sample of study subjects has to be planned for the following questionnaire survey (Zikmund, 1997). This is the next crucial step in determining the success of the survey and it depends on many factors. The first is accuracy - the broadest opinion should be interviewed as possible. Quantity is not always the answer. In my case, the sample consisted of local KBCs because I intended to direct the questions at those who work in this particular area of the regional economy. However, for a political or social survey, about which anybody can have a strong opinion, I would have to present a well-balanced cross section of society (Jackson, 2011).

Surveys are the accepted method of generating primary data. This method was chosen because it is comparably inexpensive and most of the required information can be determined by listing the exact questions. Information can be gathered directly from their response through mailing the letter to the sample with a request to fill in an online version of the questionnaire. Personal observations that can be gathered during the interview are valuable, but they cannot make up the difference in cost and time consumption between these two methods.

On-line surveys have an advantage over the other forms within the stage of processing the collected data. Filling in the questionnaire means entering limited and verified data into the computer by the rules determined by the researcher. It is possible to obtain easily accessible, coded and processed data during any stage of the data collection. Whenever the online survey process is inaccessible, computer-assisted telephone interview is the most similar alternative method.

Analysing of the collected information follows data gathering stage. It may range from basic to complex of both graphical and numerical methods. The techniques applied depend on the needs determined by the project's information requirements and characteristics of the research design (Zikmund, 1997). My internship final task was to formulate the conclusions. It should have clarified collected information in order to distinguish KBCs' situation in the region and present the research findings effectively.

Chapter 3. SINES TECNOPOLO

The Sines Tecnopolo is a pioneering non-profit project in the Alentejo region. Its activities started on August 1, 2007 with construction of their own facilities on the area of 10,000 m^2. They feature three multi-functional buildings, meeting rooms, cafeteria, offices and laboratories and a small auditorium. It is located in the Light Industrial Zone in Sines, on the west coast of Portugal. Its location is adjacent to the largest energy and petrochemical centre of Portugal, international deep-water port terminal and main fishing port in Alentejo.

The Sines Tecnopolo rose from the Independent Private Incubator project among the Municipality of Sines, University of Algarve, University of Évora, Beja Polytechnic and Setúbal Polytechnic. The funding is received from private entities, banks, governmental and international organizations. Its activities are restricted to specific sectors and provide mainly logistic and tangible services. Its institutional mission is to promote the economic and technological development of the areas in which it operates.

The mission of Sines Tecnopolo is to conduct the research and technology development and to provide expert advice to small and medium enterprises (Sines Tecnopolo, 2008). At the same time, it promotes the creation of KBCs and participates in collaborative programs in order to improve cooperation and consolidate relations between its emerging innovative companies and entrepreneurial community. For the latter, it has a "business incubator". The infrastructure is divided into three different types of buildings: Main Building, Multipurpose buildings and laboratories. The Incubation Centre consists of 24 spaces dedicated to activities that are developed in the office environment and 8 spaces intended for laboratory activities. It offers a friendly environment for the development of new companies with substantial growth potential, the regeneration of existing businesses, providing training that meets the real needs of businesses and individuals.

The multipurpose building of Sines Tecnopolo, former Quinta da Lameira, was rebuilt keeping its original architecture and charm. This space consists of an auditorium, training rooms/meetings and support offices. The Sines Tecnopolo Incubation and Entrepreneurship offers the rental of meeting rooms and an auditorium for larger events such as seminars or information sessions.

The park is devoted to the technological transfer, entrepreneurship promotion and

advanced training oriented to industry needs. It intensely participates with research centres of its founding members in order to stimulate the intellectual production and the emergence of new ideas about various business activities.

The Sines Tecnopolo originally acts as a science park and its strategy indicates particularly around the subjects of the Sea Economics & Energy (on the strength of its favourable geographic location), but it is also open to other initiatives of knowledge-based entrepreneurship. The final phase of the development process for Sines Tecnopolo was quality and recognition certificate from the European Community "BIC" (European Business & Innovation Centre Network). Apart from that, they obtained accreditation by implementing customer-oriented internal management process with ISO 9001:2008, being a first technological park in Portugal equipped with a Quality Management System.

The objectives of Sines Tecnopolo as the incubation centre, as stated in its Statute (Sines Tecnopolo, 2008) are:

1. Sines Tecnopolo is aimed to promote entrepreneurship and knowledge-based range of complementary services relevant to regional economic activity, by admitting ideas, projects and companies with a strong connection with areas of research and technological development crucial to the diversification and strengthening of the business in the region.

2. Sines Tecnopolo is also intended to promote the incorporation of technology and knowledge produced by research institutions and higher education and their transfer to the productive sector.

3. Sines Tecnopolo seeks the creation, promotion, development and management of Incubation Centre for KBC.

4. Sines Tecnopolo provides consultancy, training, marketing, rental and profit opportunities and other specialized services for business support.

The Sines Tecnopolo is a leading incubator of Alentejo and Algarve equipped with the essential accommodation for innovative projects. The incubator promotes the implementation of methodologies that enable business sustainability and mitigate the risk of failure. The entrepreneur is followed throughout the process of structuring his business idea: all aspects of the formalization of the company, its legal form, and physical setup, access to financial support programs, search for partners, the licensing

requirements, customer identification and minimal assembly for its operation.

The Sines Tecnopolo is primarily aimed at entrepreneurs with innovative business ideas to implement newly created companies wishing to locate in the municipality of Sines and companies that want to enter into new business areas in the short terms. There are 13 entities currently incubated by Sines Tecnopolo (see Table 3.1).

Entity	Entrance date	Incubation type	Space occupied, m^2	Number of jobs created
CENFIM - vocational training centre of metallurgy and metal mechanics industry	07/2009	traditional	50	1
Triplemaqui - cleaning equipment	02/2011	virtual	-	1
Coelho Ribeiro and Associates - civil society of lawyers	02/2010	traditional	25	1
Plan2bCompetitive Ltd. - consultancy, guidance and operational assistance for businesses and management of various entities, specialized vocational training	06/2012	traditional	25	1
SPMengenharia - implementation and evaluation of expertise projects for the civilian and business sectors	06/2012	traditional	25	1
Rephase Ltd. - web portals	04/2010	virtual	-	1
Primal Ltd. - development and promotion of renewable energy projects	01/2011	virtual	-	1
Enelaze Ltd. - engineering services and commerce of electrical goods	06/2011	traditional	25	1
IAPMEI - export store	05/2010	traditional	25	1
GAE - Entrepreneur Support Office - Municipality of Sines.	06/2010	traditional	50	3
Home Glam Ltd. - sale of decorative, lighting and furniture objects	10/2011	virtual	-	1
AES - Business Association of Sines	09/2009	traditional	25	1
Husete Ltd. - assignment of temporary workers	08/2010	traditional	50	2

Table 3.1 Entities currently incubated by Sines Tecnopolo
Source: Sines Tecnopolo (2012)

The Sines Tecnopolo set associative links with entities which importance reinforces its innovative nature and excellence:

- BICS - Portuguese Association of Business and Innovation Centres,
- EBN - European Business Network,
- TII - Technology Innovation International,

- AIPQR - Association of Petrochemical, Chemical and Refining Industry,
- IASP - International Association of Science Parks,
- UTEN - University Technology Enterprise Network.

The Sines Tecnopolo equally participates in national projects financed with Structural Funds: Operational Program of the Alentejo Region and FEDER incentives. Despite the recent creation of Sines Tecnopolo, it already has participated in several European projects:

- "BTECH" The EQUAL Initiative 2008-2009. Partner. Entrepreneurship.
- "TRACC". Interreg IV B SUDOE, 1st Call for projects. Partner. Road Techniques adapted to Climate Change.

Now Sines Tecnopolo is a partner institution within the EIBT- SUDOE Project developing a transnational framework for promotion and support of KBCs.

Chapter 4. EIBT-SUDOE PROJECT

One of the current problems of R&D in the European Union, and particularly in the SUDOE area is the difficulty of transforming research results into profitable innovations and generating new economic activity, wealth and jobs (EIBT-SUDOE Partners, 2012).

Although, in recent years, there has been a remarkable growth in the activities and personnel dedicated to R&D, it failed to transform the production network of the SUDOE significantly that is still based on the traditional, slightly innovative activities.

I have participated in the EIBT-SUDOE project studying the creation and development of KBCs and their integration into the economy of the SUDOE. This Project is financed by the European Regional Development Fund through the Territorial Cooperation Program for south-western Europe 2007-2013 and contributes to the priorities of the framework's innovation strategy:

- promotion of innovation and creation of stable networks of cooperation in technology,
- improving the sustainability for protection and conservation of nature and environment of the SUDOE.

Sines Tecnopolo was coordinating EIBT-SUDOE project in the Alentejo region, Portugal. There were also partners from Spain and France:

- European Centre for Business and Innovation of Navarre,
- "TECNALIA" Foundation RESEARCH & INNOVATION (País Vasco),
- European Business and Innovation Centre of the Principality of Asturias,
- The Regional Incubator of Aquitaine,
- National Centre for Scientific Research (Delegation of Aquitaine-Limousin), Service of Partnership and Valorisation.

Mentioned institutions have such profiles: 2 are European Business and Innovation Centres (BIC), other 2 are Business Incubators (including Sines Tecnopolo), and 2 entities are engaged in the valuation of research results. They all have experience in supporting the creation and/or development of KBCs, albeit from different angles and areas, thus enhancing focus and development of the Project.

The project is developed in a few stages represented in Task Groups (see Figure 4.1). Task Group 0 - Preparation of EIBT-SUDOE project included development of the idea and the form of the project, search for partners and drafting a proposal for submission to the Territorial Cooperation Program. Task Group 1 – Coordination and Management consisted of proposing and defining bodies, their responsibilities and systematics of work for the project that would satisfy its needs. After these Task Groups, partners started implementing the second Task Group of the EIBT-SUDOE project - "Exchange and improvement of the support methodology for KBCs".

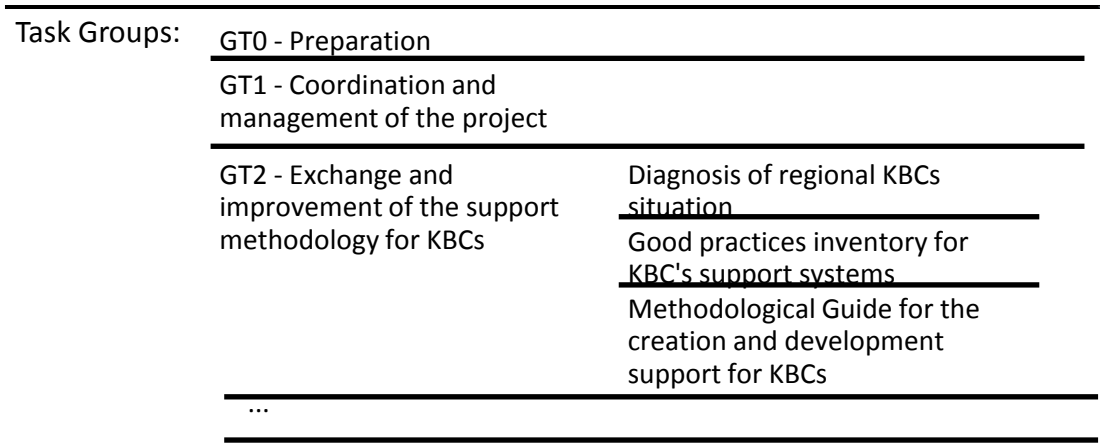

Figure 4.1 Tasks for the EIBT-SUDOE Project (emphasis on Group of Tasks 2)
Source: prepared by the author for this report.

In the beginning of my internship process at Sines Tecnopolo in June 2011, my task was to elaborate a study "Diagnosis of the KBCs situation in the Alentejo region". It was the first task of the GT2 "Exchange & Improvement". I conducted the diagnostic study to know the real state of the creation and development of KBCs in Alentejo region.

The next task in the GT2 after the diagnostic study: "Development of Good Practices Inventory of Support Systems for KBCs in the SUDOE" followed. It was not my responsibility to perform this and following tasks anymore, even though my work was used as a basis for these tasks and it was closely related to them. The final edition of the "Methodological Guide for Supporting the Creation and Development of KBCs" should be one of the major outcomes of the project and one that ensures the continuity of project outcomes beyond its duration. It should be available to the entities of the SUDOE such as universities, technological centres, incubators and development agencies that are working on entrepreneurship and innovation.

The project aims to establish networking among agents dedicated to the promotion of KBCs in the SUDOE and was designed for the continuance of results:

- new methodology for supporting the KBCs;
- creation of the "Support Systems Network for KBCs in the SUDOE" (GT3 objective) to ensure the transfer of results to other regions of SUDOE.

Dissemination of the results of the project is provided with the distribution of "Methodological Guide for monitoring the creation and development of KBCs in SUDOE" and the Organization of "European Seminar of Systems and Policies to Support the KBCs", which expects to have more than 100 experts from all the European Union.

The project will likely make the following positive impacts on the economy of SUDOE in the short terms:

- increase the number of entities within SUDOE providing support for the creation and development of KBCs,
- create Network of Support Organizations for KBCs in the SUDOE (more than 100 entities),
- increase number of KBCs created in SUDOE,
- increase the sustainability of KBCs created in SUDOE,
- increase the personnel employment in KBCs in the SUDOE,
- increase partnerships between the SUDOE's KBCs and traditional sectors,
- at least 2 Business Meetings between KBCs in the SUDOE each year,
- more than 500 registered KBCs for the Web Platform for Cooperation within the SUDOE,
- relatively more innovative business environment in the SUDOE area.

Chapter 5. CARRIED OUT ACTIVITIES

From 1 June 2011 and until the end of September 2011 I have been working for approximately 600 hours. The first day was used to complete the documentation required to sign the contract and bureaucratic protractions. Later on, I had an appointment with Rui Nunes, who was in charge of the current stage of the Project, developed in Sines Tecnopolo. We discussed working mode and schedule, and activities that were more advantageous and appealing for my participation.

Unfortunately, due to the financial situation, I could not move to Sines for the internship period. It was accepted, as a possible way of collaboration, to develop all the tasks in Faro, with periodic meetings in the office of Sines Tecnopolo.

I was explained the structure of this project, expected outcomes, and provided with the documents regarding the project in general and segment of my tasks in particular. Following week was devoted to studying the subject of the EIBT-SUDOE Project and identifying my future diagnostic study objectives.

There were 3 main tasks to carry out under GT2 "Exchange and Improvement". The task 1, called "Diagnosis of the regional KBCs situation" included my immediate objectives. This study was about the creation and development of the KBCs of SUDOE:

- characteristics of features of KBCs created in the last 3 years (sectors, origin, composition of the entrepreneurial team, funding, products, services and markets),
- characteristics of development of KBCs (considering degree of survival, primary barriers and difficulties, development of capital and market conditions, degree of internationalization, employment growth, sources of funding).

This analysis was based on the predetermined research process and common methodology of diagnosis (including objectives, design, sample and questionnaires) for all of the participating regions. The analysis was to be carried out by mining and analysing statistical data related to the regional entrepreneurial environment, presenting the selection of regional innovation strategies, programs of innovation boost and support for KBCs. Conducting a survey among a number of regional KBCs enabled us to arrive at conclusions on their characteristics and their challenges or level of support in the region.

The actions had to be implemented within the diagnosis:

- definition of the common methodology of the diagnosis,
- preparation of the questionnaire,
- sending the questionnaire and treatment of responses,
- development of the regional report.

The objective was to collect the relevant data in order to extrapolate findings common to the SUDOE area from this data later within the project.

The common methodology for all participating regions was previously defined during a meeting of EIBT-SUDOE project. I was expected to implement the actions of the diagnosis study, task 2 from GT2. The report concerning the situation of regional KBCs, done by me, was implemented in the way guided by the suggestions of the manager in charge, Rui Nunes, and directives of Project's plan and methodology, targets and technical documentation (see Figure 5.1).

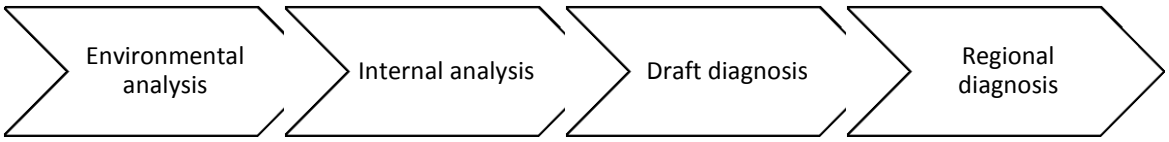

Figure 5.1 Phases of diagnosis study implementation
Source: prepared by the author for this report

During my internship, I had to adhere to the work schedule strictly and the methodology, in order to produce a study in the most understandable and brief style. All my conclusions from the study would later be used by the participants of the EIBT-SUDOE Project for developing collaborative, transnational methodology for KBCs' support.

The main goals were focused on Environmental analysis representing a brief overview of the economic and social reality in the region that should have been finished during July 2011. I used graphic methods to visualise and represent the relationship between variables, dynamics of the indices and comparison of the parameters of the region's municipalities. It was based on the data collected from the official sources, including data on location, demographics, employment and regional economy figures.

The data sources used:

- Portuguese Geographic Institute (IGP);

- National Institute of Statistics (Portugal);
- Statistics Office of the European Union.

In addition, this work included a description of entities influencing the entrepreneurial environment of the Alentejo region such as companies, universities, laboratories, consultants, venture capitalists, research organizations and institutions. I focused on collecting the following data to represent the regional agents of innovation:

- Roles of the main agents;
- Details about the regional innovation strategies: "INALENTEJO" - The Regional Operational Program of Alentejo 2007/2013 (Comissão de Coordenação e Desenvolvimento Regional do Alentejo, 2011) and "Strategic Program for the Regional System of Technology Transfer" (Inalentejo, 2011);
- Regional programs of innovation boost, including their promoters, scope, fields of application and other relevant data;
- Points of KBCs' support, including area of application, scope, promoters and beneficiaries.

The environmental analysis should have reflected aspects of the environment for later analysing their influence through the data collected from the survey (e.g. if there are supportive policies, if an economic context is favourable, if the business is strong). I requested all the innovative agents for contacts of known KBCs in the region or companies who applied for a business meeting, received support or operating in high-technology sectors to proceed with the study.

The next phase (Figure 5.1) in the diagnosis is an internal analysis of KBCs. The database of companies' contacts collected during environmental analysis together with ones provided by Rui Nunes I summarized up into the future respondents for a questionnaire. Using this database, I carried out a questionnaire in July to gather statistics and to characterize the multitude of regional innovative enterprises and classify their interaction and experience. This was performed for all the known KBCs in the region to have an idea what necessities they do have, what progress they could achieve, and what support method they consider the most useful. For the conducted survey, Rui Nunes verified my Portuguese translation (the questionnaire was previously developed in Spanish by partners of the project) and contacted the companies

accommodated in Sines Tecnopolo premises (with whom he had direct connection) to ask them to complete the questionnaire and give us a feedback. It resulted in 58 questions that were to render a database of 97 variables – the structure of the survey and data collected had to be identical among all partners of EIBT-SUDOE Project and comply with its template. After verification, I posted the survey online and forwarded 139 e-mails with the link to the questionnaire and cover letter explaining the benefits of the Project for the local entrepreneurial environment. Besides, I did telephone calls to roughly 70 companies to encourage them to collaborate and to be involved in the survey. Unfortunately, I did not receive almost any response on my call for collaboration among the regional KBCs. Only four of them completed the survey until the deadline for the diagnosis submission on August 31, 2011. Because of this, I could not collect sufficient statistics through the survey to perform a statistical analysis. Thereby, the regional study was missing some conclusions on the survey upon the submission of my internship work.

This way I finished my work on the diagnosis and wrote a draft based on the environmental and internal analysis outcomes. This study offered a description of all the gathered information and general conclusions. I did not try to give any proposals or recommendations, as the nature of this diagnosis was to gather information and make an impression about the regional innovative environment.

Afterwards, GT 2 “Development of Good Practices Inventory of Monitoring Systems for KBCs in SUDOE” and GT 3 “Elaboration of a "Methodology Guide for monitoring the creation and development of KBCs in SUDOE" followed. I have not participated in these tasks, but I was following the work of my colleagues from Sines Tecnopolo.

Chapter 6. SELF-EVALUATION AND CRITICAL ASSESSMENT

My original goals and expectations for the internship were to evolve the skills, make contacts, apply the academic background obtained during the studies at the University of Algarve, namely the course of Master degree in Economics of Innovation and Entrepreneurship, get the benefits of work experience related innovative businesses and entrepreneurship, build the curriculum vitae and explore career options

The course of my MSc has the following main objectives:

- to provide a thorough overview of the Economics of Innovation and Entrepreneurship to recent graduates and experienced professionals, by offering a rich and interactive training that is current and complies with the requirements of the labour market;
- to develop the students' ability to analyse situations and find integrated solutions to the problems related to innovation and entrepreneurship in modern societies;
- to promote the creation and dissemination of scientific research with national and international renown;
- to promote the creation of private companies in the area of innovative activity and with export capacity (Faculdade de Economia do Algarve, 2012).

The objectives of Internships at Master Course are:

- to provide students with a direct contact with professional practices and forms of assistance related to the skills developed throughout the course;
- to develop ability to use the adequate theoretical and methodological approaches appropriate to specific problems;
- to increase the level of maturity, preparedness and human relationship skills of students to future job performance;
- to encourage and support the exchange between the university and the world of work.

In this way, my internship goals and expectations in Sines Tecnopolo were particularly relevant to the activities that the master course is focused on.

The point, that I took part in the development of EIBT-SUDOE Project certainly met my expectations since the idea of the Project was to promote entrepreneurship and innovative business, study and recognise the successful policies for KBC support, the potential barriers and challenges for such companies. I was completely immersed in the innovative business environment of the Alentejo region and Portugal during performing my tasks.

Drafting and updating the database of the companies related to the EIBT-SUDOE Project that serves all the innovation agents and had to become a part of the project on the future tasks activities did not work as I expected. There were obvious collaboration barriers I faced during the survey. I have got an understanding of the structure of the regional developing economy, the geographical location of the participants and their actions coordinated through the national, regional and local policies and programs. Nevertheless, eventually companies did not show any inclination for collaboration with Sines Tecnopolo as innovation agent even though many efforts were made.

A lot of work and time it took but I did not achieve the informational transparency and collaboration between these components of a complex system of regional innovative and knowledge-based entrepreneurial environment. Although Oakey (2010) states that typical response rate for studies addressing strategic issues is 10-12%, we received only 3% of responses. It could be a consequence of several factors:

- Survey's extensiveness (58 clearly defined and closed-ended questions) could be a flaw.
- August is a common time for holidays, and probably this was a case when the key staff were out of the office.
- The respondents of the email survey are not highly motivated for an immediate response, and can forget about it eventually.
- The predefined mode for data collecting was an online survey (lacking resources for carrying out interviews), though some of the respondents may prefer to share their internal figures and facts during personal interviews only.

These factors decreased the possibility to draw conclusion about the challenges and barriers that KBCs experience in their business activities.

As I expected from the beginning of my internship I had to work in bilingual environment during my tasks: Portuguese – as the national language and English – as the language of the Project activities. It was a challenging task as both of these languages are different from my natives: Russian and Ukrainian. However, I was looking for this kind of work where I could improve my skills. Bilingual approach is one of the basic skills together with computer skills that are vital for any modern borderless collaborative and organizational activities. Sharing the details of local features and experience of KBCs is important for developing the common European policies and frameworks for innovative business support.

This internship gave me the opportunity to see the preliminary actions and preparations for organizing the business support and economic policies. Contacting the regional innovation agents and businesses met my expectations as it demonstrated how the business is promoted in Portugal.

The business meetings held by Sines Tecnopolo exceeded my expectations giving me the chance to see how the important matters are discussed, compromises are achieved, and decisions are made at the business incubator.

I found out some improvements that I have made after reviewing my work from the beginning of the internship. When I looked through my diagnosis, it showed me that I was strictly following all the procedures and methodologies within sources and content used. I earned experience of practical research and survey. With all this, it seems that my academic and practical work proficiency developed, and my further work in this field will flow much more easily and effective.

My knowledge about entrepreneurship has been improved in practical areas. Overall, my research skills and organization have been improved, and I have developed an efficient distant research collaboration style.

Chapter 7. CONCLUSIONS

Activities performed during the internship were extremely valuable for the development of skills using the theoretical and methodological approach suited to specific problems. The activity provided benefits from the standpoint of working in a regional innovation business association, and respecting all the policies and rules of the collaborative work.

I have explored the complexity of the environment in which KBCs are developing and competing, regional policies that are supporting innovative commercial activity in the region and improving the effectiveness of the regional innovation agents. Interaction with the Portuguese enterprises and entities certainly makes the experience much more complete, forms a link between the skills developed throughout the course and practical professional activities. I feel my work is a relevant contribution to the development of the methodological task of the EIBT-SUDOE Project, as it facilitates the understanding of entrepreneurial activity and regional dynamics.

This internship has provided insight into the difficulties of developing innovative companies and the influence of policies on the entrepreneurial environment. By analysing the interactions among KBCs and regional innovation agents, I was observing the basics of the knowledge society idea with the perfect availability of qualified staff, knowledge and financing resources for the feasible and commercially attractive business projects. At the same time, continuous assessment and elaborating of up-to-date methodologies and achievement discussion should be carried-out for all levels of such interactions.

I consider Sines Tecnopolo to be the one of the most favourable internship places for a student of the Master course in Economics of Innovation and Entrepreneurship. You can totally immerse yourself in the business environment and watch the development agencies, business associations, municipalities, consultancies, coordination committees, authorities, as well as other public or private institutions acting all together on the adoption and promotion of entrepreneurship and innovation as strategic development goals.

My internship has definitely benefited me in many ways. I learned how to become a well-rounded person and employee. I feel the internship has achieved its goals to be a trial period for the future expert in the area of entrepreneurship and innovative economies adding many technical skills, as well as the development of interpersonal

relationships. I believe this internship in Sines Tecnopolo has bettered me and prepared me for the further employment and career ahead.

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