

# PROJECT PERIODIC REPORT

Grant Agreement number: 611221

Project acronym: ILINC

Project title: Establishing a European Network of Law Incubators that Bridge ICT Entrepreneurs and Start-ups with Law Students

Funding Scheme: FP7-ICT-2013-10

Date of latest version of Annex I against which the assessment will be made:

Periodic report:                    1<sup>st</sup>     2<sup>nd</sup>     3<sup>rd</sup>     4<sup>th</sup>

Period covered:                    from 1 October 2014 to 30 September 2015

Name, title and organisation of the scientific representative of the project's coordinator<sup>1</sup>:

Professor Ian Walden,  
Centre for Commercial Law Studies  
Queen Mary, University of London  
67-69 Lincoln's Inn Fields  
London WC2A 3JB

Tel: +44-(0)20-7882-8086

Fax: +44-(0)20-7882-7276

E-mail: [i.n.walden@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:i.n.walden@qmul.ac.uk)

Project website<sup>2</sup> address: [www.ilincnetwork.eu](http://www.ilincnetwork.eu)

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<sup>1</sup> Usually the contact person of the coordinator as specified in Art. 8.1. of the Grant Agreement.

<sup>2</sup> The home page of the website should contain the generic European flag and the FP7 logo which are available in electronic format at the Europa website (logo of the European flag: [http://europa.eu/abc/symbols/emblem/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/abc/symbols/emblem/index_en.htm) logo of the 7th FP: [http://ec.europa.eu/research/fp7/index\\_en.cfm?pg=logos](http://ec.europa.eu/research/fp7/index_en.cfm?pg=logos)). The area of activity of the project should also be mentioned.

## **2. Publishable Summary**

### **2.1 iLINC Project: Context**

Early-stage start-up companies and entrepreneurs looking to develop and commercialise new ideas and technologies need to draw upon a wide range of resources to build momentum and firmly establish business operations and market presence. This is particularly true in the information and communications technology (ICT) space, where the breadth of resources required goes well beyond management expertise and access to investment finance to include a range of very specific skills related to digital technology innovation.

This portfolio of technology-related skills and knowledge includes legal expertise, the nature of which is often more specific than the typical transactional work covering, for example, corporate structure and contracts. Indeed, many start-up companies in the ICT sector, even at an early stage of development, need to develop an understanding of a range of complex legal issues concerning the ownership, use, sharing and commercialisation of intellectual property, as well as ensuring compliance with different regulatory frameworks at national, regional and international levels.

This clear need for specialised legal support for start-ups and entrepreneurs in the ICT sector is of course met to some extent, particularly in some of the main European technology hubs.

Government-funded initiatives (both at a national and EU level) have supported the provision of relatively rudimentary legal support to start-ups and entrepreneurs for the protection and ownership of intellectual property. Legal professionals also provide low-cost (and sometimes free) legal services to start-up companies in the hope of securing longer-term and full-fee-paying clients.

A pioneering example of where a university-based legal institution has established an initiative to provide legal support to start-ups and entrepreneurs is found at Brooklyn Law School in the US. Since 2008, the Brooklyn Law Incubator and Policy (BLIP) Clinic has functioned out of Brooklyn Law School as a full-service, technology-oriented law firm in which students provide transactional, policy, litigation, and general legal support to technology-oriented, start-up clients.

In Europe, however, such university-based legal support for ICT start-ups and entrepreneurs has only just started to emerge. There are examples of established advice centre initiatives at QMUL and the University of Amsterdam. Until two years ago, QMUL had focused on the provision of legal advice to individuals in areas such as employment, immigration and social security law. The Amsterdam Clinic had specialised in providing support in the area of technology and media law, but aimed at consumers, citizens and small businesses, not start-ups. Central to the project, therefore, is to learn from the experience and expertise of BLIP and build a European network of law incubators that reflects the needs and conditions of European start-ups and entrepreneurs.

A growing knowledge-based economy with a strong portfolio of ICT enterprises will see a concomitant growth in demand for legal support. And, while a limited number of leading university-based law institutions in Europe have taken some initial steps to establish legal support clinics (as mentioned above), these initiatives are few in number and often do not cover some of the more specific and/or advanced needs of start-ups and entrepreneurs in the ICT sector. Furthermore, none of these initiatives are networked in any meaningful way.

Finally, the need to inspire and encourage a new generation of lawyers capable of representing ICT and other emerging technology companies is also fundamental to ensuring technological, economic, social and political progress. Too many students graduate from law school programmes without the experience and confidence needed to represent the sorts of ventures that will be encountered in the 21st Century. As such, the current situation presents an acute need for cost-effective and forward-thinking legal services.

## 2.2 iLINC Project: Overall Concept

To help satisfy a clear need for more advanced legal support in the ICT sector, and to cover the specificities of different national legal systems, both within Europe and around the world, this project draws upon the wealth of expertise and capabilities of university-based legal institutions in order to:

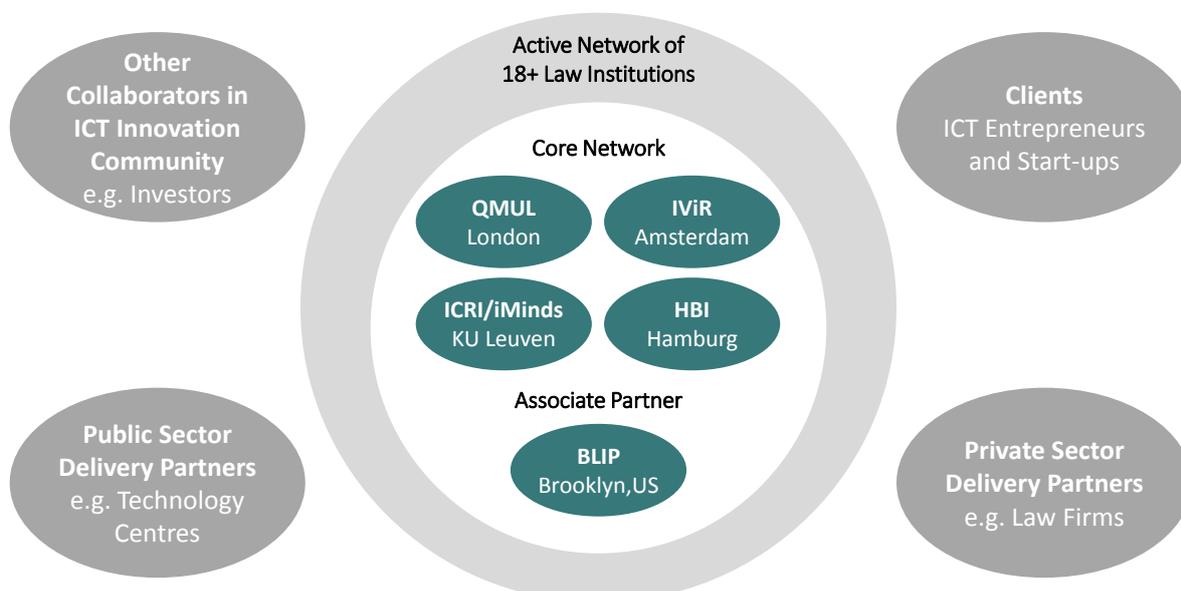
### Project Concept

Link the legal demands of ICT SMEs, early-stage businesses and entrepreneurs with the knowledge and abilities of postgraduate law students at leading legal academic institutions through establishing an open European network of law incubators.

This open network of law incubators operates at three main levels:

- **Firstly, the ‘Core Network’ of four leading European academic institutions** that have already taken early steps towards establishing law incubators within their own regional ecosystem of start-ups and entrepreneurs in the ICT sector. The Brooklyn Law School-based Incubator is working in close association with the Core Network in order to help establish a set of best practices in Europe. Brooklyn provides important expert input and facilitation for specific aspects of this project. The EU-US connection is also helping client companies in the ICT sector with transatlantic development – often a vital bridge in the digital technology space.
- **Secondly, the ‘Active Network’ of participating academic** that have an interest in setting up their own law incubators or are looking to benefit from the collective expertise of the Core Network in some other related way.
- **Thirdly, the ‘Extended Network’ of private and public sector non-academic entities** for whom some form of association with the Core/Active Network is beneficial. Apart from client start-ups and entrepreneurs that benefit directly from the legal services provided, this includes service delivery partners in both the private and public sectors e.g. professional advisors (for next-stage input) and technology centres.

### iLINC: an open European Network of law incubators that supports the provision of legal services to ICT start-ups and entrepreneurs



## 2.3 iLINC Project: Overall Objectives

With reference to the overall structure of the law incubator network and associated entities, this project has a number of clear objectives for all three levels of the network.

***Within the Core Network i.e. among the four lead institutions***, the main project objectives are to:

- Consolidate and share existing practices between core members, with input from BLIP at the Brooklyn Law School;
- Define individual and collective expertise and service profiles that form the services to be provided to ICT start-ups and entrepreneurs;
- Define the main options for service delivery (e.g. modes of supervisory involvement of senior institutional staff); the involvement of delivery partners (e.g. collaboration with legal professionals); and the overall service integration with educational programmes;
- Develop a full understanding of the legal obstacles associated with the establishment of law incubators within European countries;
- Develop the ‘Law Incubator Network Communications Platform’ (iLINC Portal) for the project;
- Undertake networking and coordination activities with the Active Network of European law institutions to facilitate all of the objectives listed above and below.

***The Core Network members is collaborating with the Active Network of over 12 European law institutions*** in order to achieve the following project objectives:

- Undertake a series of events and dissemination activities to share current/future/best practices on the provision of legal advice by university-based law incubators (‘Best Practice Sharing Events’);
- Assist the individual law institutions in the Active Network to develop strategies and action plans that will enable them to establish their own law incubation capabilities;
- Collaborate with individual law institutions in the Active Network to deliver pan-European (‘multi-institutional’) legal services to SMEs, start-ups and entrepreneurs where and when the need arises;
- Develop a support system within the Law Incubator Network Communications Platform (iLINC Portal) that allows access to information on options / practices for service delivery, collaboration mechanisms and integration with educational programmes.
- Commit to establish ongoing and sustainable operation of the iLINC Network following project completion.

***The Core Network members and the Active Network of European law institutions are working together with other associated entities within an Extended Network*** in order to achieve the following project objectives:

- Identify and present the European Network of Law Incubators to potentially interested parties;
- Collaborate with these entities to identify most promising modes of collaboration;
- Undertake a series of events and dissemination activities that focus on the joint exploration of key legal challenges faced by ICT SMEs, start-ups and entrepreneurs;
- Develop a support system within the iLINC Portal that allows access to relevant information for different types of collaborating entities.

## 2.4 Work Performed and the Main Results Achieved to Date

After two years since project commencement, iLINC has made excellent progress:

- All four Core Network partners have established legal incubators that are up-and-running and providing legal services to start-ups. **During Period 2, over 350 European start-ups have benefitted from pro-bono legal advice provided by 139 students (Periods 1 and 2) from the incubators of the four core partners.**
- All iLINC Work Packages have been completed on time and in full. Indeed, further to guidance provided at the Interim Review Meeting, a bolder approach for WP1 was taken.
- **The Active Network has grown to 18 partners.** At the recent Best Practice Sharing Event in Berlin (BPS3), 17 Active Network participants from 11 different institutions were present. **iLINC has achieved an Active Network that is 50% bigger than planned at the project outset.**
- **In Period 2 of the iLINC project, over 700 entrepreneurs and start-ups were involved in 21 ICT Legal Challenge Events, Clinics and Workshops.** This compares to over 300 participants and 17 events in the first year of the project. Again, this represents a year-on-year expansion in event-based activity of over 100%.
- The iLINC project has made a significant contribution towards collaborative activities with four of the other Start-up Europe Hub projects (ICT2B, ACE, GET eHealth and Open Axel).
- iLINC were invited to participate in the EshipLaw Law Clinics Summit and Prototyping Jam held in April 2015 in Kansas City, Missouri. **This has established iLINC as an integral part of a global network of law incubators and clinics.**

## 2.5 Expected Final Results and their Potential Impact and Use

Launched in October 2013 as a two-year programme and funded by the EU, **iLINC is achieving its objectives by focussing on the following final results:**

- Building the leading Europe-wide network of law incubators and (with extensions to a US network: EshipLaw) create a global network of networks;
- Understanding the legal requirements of start-ups;
- Developing and sharing best-practices for a) service delivery from law incubators across the European network; and b) linking student project engagement with learning programmes across the European network; and
- Establishing a platform for collaboration with focussed events and an online portal. This will help to support the overall increase in provision of legal support to start-ups from European law incubators (the ‘law incubation capacity’).

As a direct consequence of undertaking the above, **the impact of iLINC has been to:**

- Accelerate the innovation of ICT start-ups and entrepreneurs;
- Enrich the student learning experience through direct engagement with real clients and relevant projects;
- Provide collaborating law firms with access to a global legal talent pool;
- Contribute towards building the overall European legal incubation capacity for technology start-ups and entrepreneurs.

## 2.6 Address of the Project Public Website

The website for the iLINC project can be found at [www.ilincnetwork.eu](http://www.ilincnetwork.eu)