PROJECT PERIODIC REPORT

Grant Agreement number: 611878

Project acronym: ATALANTA

Project title: Atalanta is TransnAtionaL Accelerator NeTworks Acceleration

Funding Scheme: Coordination and Support Action (CSA)

Date of latest version of Annex I against which the assessment will be made: 15/03/2016

Periodic report: 1st ☐   2nd ☐   3rd **X**

Period covered: from 1/9/2015   to 31/8/2016

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[1] Usually the contact person of the coordinator as specified in Art. 8.1. of the Grant Agreement.

[2] 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 logo of the 7th FP: http://ec.europa.eu/research/fp7/index_en.cfm?pg=logos). The area of activity of the project should also be mentioned.

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1. Publishable summary

The overall project objective is to drive innovation, facilitate technology transfer and to support entrepreneurship on a transnational European level to contribute to the exploitation of more innovative products and services coming from European R&D projects and to support the creation of more successful ICT start-ups in Europe. This overall objective is achieved through actions and events organised in thematic domains as well as the use of existing electronic platforms and networking tools. The project will has a special focus on acceleration programmes, which are the new paradigm regarding entrepreneurship support. In more concrete terms, **the project supports groups of leading accelerators for delivering cross border services to innovative SMEs and entrepreneurs and links these groups with knowledge creators and education organisations (*i.e.* mentors, trainers, service providers and partners) on one side, to venture capital organisations (*i.e.* investors) and the business world (*i.e.* potential clients, partners and suppliers) on the other**. This corresponds to the following detailed objectives:

- **Transnational Accelerators**

Install transnational cooperation networks of accelerators to enhance sharing of best practices, dissemination of new methodologies, dissemination of accelerator programmes towards knowledge creators and optimised mapping of start-ups to accelerator programmes; new networks will build on existing organisations, but will extend existing operation schemes;

- **Linking Knowledge Creation and Enterprise Creation**

Install new transnational cooperation networks and improve existing networks by linking accelerators with innovation networks, in particular the EBN and other incubator networks, but also networks of researchers and PhD students at universities and research centres and networks of project officers at European funding initiatives;

- **Creating Synergy Networks**

Install new transnational synergy networks and improve existing ones by linking accelerator networks with networks of venture capital organisations and ecosystems of potential suppliers, partners and customers in the ICT area;

- **New Techniques and Methodologies**

Provide new real and virtual techniques and methods for transnational cooperation, such as virtual acceleration, real and virtual office hours for leading edge experience sharing and virtual mentoring; these techniques will be implemented by existing internet-based tools, new tools are developed only if no solution is available for a certain purpose.

To achieve these goals, the project performed three iterations of dissemination, capacitation of facilitators and research champions, preparation of start-ups, acceleration programmes and synergy networking including start-up mentoring and training. The steps in each iteration were implemented in terms of dissemination and training events, the partners' acceleration programmes and physical and virtual office hours. The intention in performing the activities in iterations was to test and optimise the cooperation schemes and new methodologies and to control their success.

This reporting period corresponds to the last iteration and marks the closing of the project. During this reporting period several of the activities continued to be executed as planned, namely acceleration activities, office hours, promotion and dissemination as well as the synergy activities connecting accelerators with supporting resources and graduated start-ups to investors and potential partners. Major strategic achievements during this reporting period corresponded to:
- Successful implementation of the acceleration programs related to the third iteration: in the sequence of ATALANTA year 2, the project continued to implement events, workshops, mentoring

and other programs that provide quality resources and skills to startups in the European ecosystem. A total of 157 startups have benefited from the acceleration programmes with direct mentoring on their business, establishment of key business relationships, raising of capital and partnerships. The third iteration has seen a higher number of programmes, higher number of selected start-ups, higher number of opportunities to connect the graduated start-ups with investors and potential partners, higher number of graduates raising funding and a higher amount raised

- Piloting of virtual office hours and startup exchange
- Creation of the European Accelerator Network: to expand beyond the consortium, core activities for transnational collaboration between accelerators, namely Staff Exchange and the research collaboration for the whitepaper on acceleration. This network is also the driving platform for continuation of these initiatives as well as of the annual European Accelerator Summit.
- Organization of two European Accelerator Summits with a join collaboration in 2016 with the well established GAN (Global Accelerator Network)
- New business models adopted by the participating accelerators leading to more internationalisation for the benefit of the startups

The achievements mentioned above are major steps for the accelerators to enlarge their offering towards start-ups.

1.1 Project objectives for the third period

The main objectives for the third period were:
- Planning and execution of the final iterations of dissemination, capacitation of facilitators and research champions, preparation of start-ups, acceleration programmes and synergy networking including start-up mentoring and training;
- Planning and launch of the European Accelerator Network to enlarge transnational collaboration between accelerators
- Planning, piloting and executing Virtual Office Hours
- Planning and execution of two European Accelerator Summits
- Developping and publishing a white paper on the state and future of acceleration to share best practices with other accelerators
- Continue execution of Staff Exchange and expand activities outside of the ATALANTA network
- Run several iterations of Startup Exchange
- Implementation of Second Chance processes and functionalities
- Test and optimise the cooperation schemes and new methodologies after the previous iterations;
- Tuning and implementation of a consistent exploitation, dissemination and promotion plan;
- Planning and execution of the international ATALANTA events;
- Continued development and dissemination of planned F6S platform functionalities;
- Continued execution of office hours and other experimental methods introduced during ATALANTA.

With the following specific objectives for each Work package:

WP2 Bridging

WP2 objectives are consistent throughout all three reporting periods:
1. Promotion of accelerator programs. This task is different from WP6 tasks of promotion and dissemination, as it is focused on promoting accelerators themselves and their activities to start-ups and to other accelerator programs. This way it bridges different European accelerators and geographical divide of start-up support.
2. Capacitation activities. Carried out via events, attracting a large number of startups, that never heard of ATALANTA or accelerator programs in general and funneling them to preparation task.
3. Preparation activities. Carried out by organising events, that are accelerator related, where all interested can participate, meet start-ups participating in accelerator and prepare their idea for submission.

All the work-plan of WP2 has been implemented in 3 iterations of the Promotion Plan (D2.1, D2.3 and D2.7).

WP3 Transnational Accelerators

The main objective for WP3 was the planning and execution of the last iteration of the acceleration programs. Despite being the 5th and 6th iteration of the accelerators (for most partners), changes to the programs are a result of the continuous reflection and search for best practices. As such, despite looking as business as usual, the implementation of the successive iterations with evaluation and best practices sharing after each iteration resulted in new formats of acceleration as well as new business models adopted by most of the accelerators in Atalanta.

WP4 Office Hours

The main objective for WP4 was the execution of Office Hours and other experimental means (such as the start-up exchange scheme). Different formats of office hours were tested and virtual office hours were implemented. A few pilots of Startup Exchange were also executed.

WP5 Synergies

During this period the objective was to implement the third iteration of the synergy activities and open up opportunities for the accelerators as well as the graduated start-ups to connect with broader ecosystems and investment sources, namely pitching events and the international synergy event with matchmaking between startups and investors. In addition the launch of the European Accelerator Network, execution of 2 European Accelerator Summits and the publication of a white paper on acceleration were also included in the workpackage as additional activities thought along the previous reporting periods.

WP6 Exploitation and Dissemination

The main objectives of the first period were to:
- Continue the implementation of the exploitation and dissemination activities as planed.
- Define and implement exploitation and dissemination strategies for the European Accelerator Network and white paper

In this document, and according to the recommendations of the previous review, we try to better highlight the concrete results of the ATALANTA project and distinguish those from the day-to-day operations at accelerators. We also attempt to be more illustrative of the accomplishments of the ATALANTA project resulting from the implementation of the 3 iterations.