



Trend Chart on Innovation in Europe

DE 32

General presentation of the measure/scheme/action/regulation

Country

Germany

Geographical coverage, national or regional (state region)

(National)

Title of the measure

TOP - Technology oriented visiting and information programme

Information Source/Reference

www.top-online.de

Overview (nature, main goals)

The TOP-programme provides support for knowledge exchange, learning and co-operation among companies. Managers from SMEs is invited to a leading firm in a certain field of technology. They can learn how leading firms organise their innovation processes and how they proceed in technology development. They can discuss different approaches and learn from the experience these leading firms made. At the end, learning should increase innovation activities and innovation success in SMEs.

Action Plan objective addressed by measure

I.4. Innovation & Management

III.5. Absorption of Technologies by SMEs

Administering agency

F.A.Z.-Institut für Management-, Markt- und Medieninformation GmbH

Mainzer Landstrasse 195, Germany

Phone: +49 69 75 91 - 1133

Fax: +49 69 75 91 - 2301

Web Site: www.faz-institut.de

Name of the manager(s) responsible for the implementation of this measure with address, fax, phone

Markus Garn

F.A.Z.-Institut für Management-, Markt- und Medieninformation GmbH

Mainzer Landstrasse 195, Germany

Phone: +49 69 75 91 - 1133

Fax: +49 69 75 91 - 2301

e-mail: mail@top-online.de

Description of Scheme

General Information

Reference to legal basis (e.g. act, public document, ...)

Directive on the TOP-programme, issued by the BMWi.

Does the measure receive central funding or regional funding?

Central

Start date

1992

Expected date of completion

indefinite

Previous measure (name, date, links with the current measure)

No previous measure

Reasons for launching/modifying the new measure

SMEs often lack in experience how to organise innovation processes efficiently and effectively. On the market, there is a large but heterogeneous supply of innovation consultants. SMEs show information asymmetries concerning the quality and relevance of innovation consulting services offered. This programme reduces information asymmetry by selecting a number of successful, technologically leading firms from whom SMEs may learn for their own innovation activities. The diffusion of knowledge and best practice is fostered, and innovation activities in the economy will be increased.

Have any of the main features of the measure/scheme/action/regulation changed during its implementation

Search

Publications

Who is Who

News

Links

Search

Contact Us

FAQ

Disclaimer

no, but several minor changes in the way the visits are organised and in the list of firms to be visited occurred.

What is the predominant role of the government?

Funding source, stimulator

Target Group

Who are the target groups of the measure?

Large Companies/Large Industrial Companies

SMEs/Industrial SMEs

Organisation and Implementation

Organisation and Structure

The visiting firms and the host company can discuss and exchange knowledge and experiences. Today, the TOP-programme organises visits at 108 different hosting firms. Since the start of the programme, more than 17,000 representatives of visiting firms have participated. Topics of visits include work organisation, production engineering, team work information processing, quality-guarantee, environment protection and business strategies. A list of firms hosting TOP-visits and dates for visits are presented in a TOP-catalog, also available on the internet (www.top-online.de). SMEs interested in a visit apply via the internet or by traditional communication. Approx. 10 days before the event, they receive confirmation. Visits last one day. Participation fees are Euro 225 per SME. The TOP-programme provides financial support for organising and carrying out visiting programmes (i.e. mainly costs covered by the administering agency). No subsidies are provided for SMEs and host companies. Currently, there are initiatives to integrate the TOP-programme with similar programmes in other countries (UK, Spain, Austria, Netherlands, Canada).

What are the criteria for eligibility?

Visiting firms must belong to the group of SMEs. Hosting firms are free to reject the visit to a certain firm.

What is the mode of delivery of the measure?

subsidies for the organising agency and for carrying out the visiting programmes, but no financial support to visiting firms or to host firms

Financing : Overall budget allocated to the measure

not available yet

Financing : expenditure per year

not available yet

Financing : other budgetary sources (additional financing)

no

Results

Result Measurement

What are the main indicators for the measurement of the results ?

Number of participating firms, number of SMEs improving their innovation processes as a result of visits to leading firms.

Where an evaluation has taken place, what were the main results achieved?

There is an ongoing evaluation by the means of a survey of visiting firms and host firms. A short version of the results is available on the internet (www.top-online.de/top-erfolgsbilanz). Three quarters of the participating SMEs assess the quality of the TOP-programme as very good, the remaining as good. 74 per cent of participating SMEs plan to participate another time in future. The individual events at the hosting firms receive a positive assessment, too. Both the number of technologically leading firms ready to act as hosts, and the number of SMEs visiting those hosting firms is perceived as being high. There are currently 108 hosting firms and about 2,500 visiting firms per year. More than 17,000 SMEs have participated in the programme since its start. In 2000, 2,458 SMEs participated, which is a slight increase compared to 1999. The number of hosting firms was 108 in 2000, one more than in 1999. In 2001, the Federal Minister of Economics and Technology awarded a TOP-prize to Vaillant, a company that organised 12 events within the TOP programme.

If no official evaluation has been undertaken, have there been any indicators of success?

see above

Observations

Which mechanisms seem to function well in the measure?

The broad spectrum of topics discussed at the visiting programmes, the personal contact between firm members and the practice-oriented themes are regarded as major success factors of the programme.

Which mechanisms seem to be less successful in the measure?

The majority of visiting firms are non-SME, more than 50 per cent have 500 employees

more. The limitation of a visit to one day is regarded as a shortcoming by many participants. Furthermore, many participants ask for more detailed information by the hosting form. Especially, they feel a lack in information on strategic planning and firm strategies.

Are there any other measures planned or in operation as a follow up to this measure? Direction of the planned measures? Objectives? Target groups?

no

