

**FRI-START *IT-FR MARITIME CERTIFICATION***  
***Quality dedicated system, criteria and procedure***  
***Proposal***

## SUMMARY

■	<b>PREAMBLE: BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES OF EBN'S MISSION FOR FRI_START</b> .....	3
I.	<b>METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH: ELEMENTS TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A QUALITY REFERENCE FRAMEWORK FOR FRI_START</b> .....	6
	<b>A. Types of certifications and possible application for FRI_START</b> .....	6
	<b>B. Taking into account the territory specificities and FRI_START priority sectors: maritime and shoreline ecosystem, cross-border area, value chain of priority sectors</b> .....	7
	1. A cross-border territory, impacted by a maritime economy ("blue economy") .....	7
	a. <i>Economic activities, planning issues and stakeholder play in maritime territories</i> .....	7
	b. <i>Innovative project leaders with needs shaped by maritime specificities</i> .....	8
	c. <i>A value chain beyond the limits of the maritime territory</i> .....	9
	2. Eco-innovation or "green economy", a common thread in FRI_START's priority sectors: challenges, markets, business model .....	9
	<b>C. Operational objectives and positioning of the FRI_START quality reference framework</b> .....	10
II.	<b>THE CONFIGURATION OF THE COMPONENTS OF THE QUALITY REFERENTIAL FRAMEWORK IT-FR FR START AND CONSTITUTIVE CHARTER: PROPOSALS</b> .....	12
	<b>A. Components and criteria of the "FRI_START Network" Quality Charter</b> .....	12
	1. To be a support professional for companies and carriers of innovative projects leaders....	12
	2. Demonstrate and explain its connection and contribution to the value chains of FRI_START's priority sectors and demonstrate its ability to dialogue and build operational partnerships with stakeholders and in these value chains .....	12
	3. Professionalize its teams and guarantee the increase in skills of employees on specific topics to support project leaders in the sectors for which needs have been identified .....	13
	4. Commit to working together, and demonstrate this capacity for cooperation with qualitative and quantitative indicators .....	14
	<b>B. Elaboration of a founding Charter and test</b> .....	14
III.	<b>CERTIFICATION PROCEDURE: PROPOSALS</b> .....	15
	<b>A. The evaluators: the FRI_START Quality Board</b> .....	15
	<b>B. The certification procedure</b> .....	15
	1. For FRI_START partners: founding members .....	15
	2. For new players wishing to join the FRI_START network.....	16
IV.	<b>PERSPECTIVE: OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPING CERTIFICATION</b> .....	16
V.	<b>FURTHER STEPS</b> .....	16

■ **PREAMBLE: BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES OF EBN'S MISSION FOR FRI\_START**

■ **Background and FRI START general objectives**

FRI\_START is one of the projects selected within the framework of the **Interreg Italy-France Maritime Program 2014-2020** known as "Marittimo".

The **Interreg Italy-France Maritime program** is a cross-border program co-financed by the **European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)** under the **European Territorial Cooperation (ETC)** objective.



The Program aims to achieve the objectives of the **EU 2020 Strategy** in the north-central Mediterranean, promoting **smart, sustainable and inclusive growth**. The program takes into account the issues of marine, coastal and island areas, but also focuses on enhancing the internal areas and addressing issues related to their isolation.

The main objective is to contribute to strengthening cross-border cooperation between the designated regions, making the cooperation zone a competitive, sustainable and inclusive zone in the European and Mediterranean panorama.

In terms of economic development, Marittimo's objectives are to support the cross-border sectors such as: **boating and shipbuilding, innovative and sustainable tourism, "blue" and "green" biotechnologies**, as well as **"blue" and "green" renewable energies**. These sectors are crucial to assuring a basis for growth, competitiveness and employment in the area of cooperation.

In this context the general objective of FRI\_START is to create an environment that encourages the emergence of innovative companies able to position themselves firmly in the region. The common challenge consist in encouraging innovation, cross-border and global collaboration.

Coordinated and implemented by a partnership made up of 6 professional regional actors of innovation and business creation, FRI START aims to create a network of incubators certified "Quality Marittimo IT\_FR". The expected operational result is the creation of a cross-border and integrated incubator service platform. The mission of the platform will be to support innovative startups in their development and growth at regional, national and international levels, with a priority on Marittimo areas mentioned above.

To achieve these objectives, the project partners have planned the following actions:

- ⇒ joint analysis and comparison of their respective service offerings and competences but also with regard to national and European standards supporting the innovative companies
- ⇒ identify the best practices and the most efficient devices implemented within the group and retain them as relevant services that can be expanded and shared across the cross-border network
- ⇒ observe the experience and practices of other territories sharing similar issues and transfer relevant information
- ⇒ stand out and ensure an optimal level of service quality, by creating a quality baseline system that should be applied at group level ; the baseline system can be extended to other innovation professionals at national level, if necessary European - that are likely to contribute to the development of the cross-border territory

- **The mission of EBN**

It is in this latter context that EBN (European Business Network), the only European network of innovation professionals and managing on behalf of the European Commission the EU BIC label (European Business Innovation Centre), was mobilized.

The EU|BIC F.I.L.S.E. (EU|BIC Liguria) has requested EBN's assistance in the development of the certification and quality component within the project FRI\_START which has the overall aim to generate improved entrepreneurship cross-border support between France and Italy.

The 6 partners of the project wished to proceed according to a collaborative approach and based on an exchange of good practices. In particular, the partners wanted to identify the strengths and weaknesses of each organization, both qualitatively and quantitatively, based on the analysis of performance indicators. This benchmarking work will allow them to retain and deploy the best practices of each project. They therefore wished to rely on the tools and on the EBN certification model, used for the EU BIC certification, which will allow them to have comparative data at consortium level, but also with regard to the European level.

## I. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH: ELEMENTS TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A QUALITY REFERENCE FRAMEWORK FOR FRI\_START

### A. Types of certifications and possible application for FRI\_START

In order to propose to FRI\_START partners a quality, adapted and optimal reference framework, EBN, in addition to relying on its own experience and on its own certification system, found interesting to analyse other existing certification models in relation to innovation ecosystems.

Indeed the case of the project FRI\_START, implies a context that combines two key strategic strands. First is related to the business line, the mission's dimension of the organizations, their will to work together and the ability to network. The second one underlines the specificities related to the territory and to targeted economic activities.

Therefore the **quality reference framework to be implemented will necessarily have to take into account these dimensions**. The focus will no rely on an "individual" approach aimed solely at evaluating the mission of supporting each partner's innovative companies, technical and financial capacity and its performance.

The reference framework **should also incorporate the approaches used by the "ecosystem" labels or the concept of skills certification**, linked to employees and staff working for partner organizations.

In addition to the EU-BIC model, EBN analysed several certification models which could be inspiring for the Maritime FRI\_START reference framework:

- ⇒ The French reference framework "Technopole RETIS"
- ⇒ IASP Science Parks and Areas of Innovation Evaluation Framework
- ⇒ The ESA BIC network model
- ⇒ The model of the Italian label "qualifica di incubatore certificato di innovative start-up"

To these models, are added other forms of certification which can be integrated if necessary according to the needs of FRI\_START network

- ⇒ standards that validate quality procedures related to the management and internal organization of tasks and functions
- ⇒ or qualifications that validate the skills and experience of professionals (diplomas, qualifying trainings etc.)

**B. Taking into account the territory specificities and FRI\_START priority sectors: maritime and shoreline ecosystem, cross-border area, value chain of priority sectors**

**1. A cross-border territory, impacted by a maritime economy ("blue economy")**

*a. Economic activities, planning issues and stakeholder play in maritime territories*

A part of FRI\_START territory is located in coastal zone and is in fact marked by this geographical situation, the ecosystem which is associated to it, in particular in terms of economy and innovation. The maritime activities have an effect on everything that is related to water, to the sea. They concern both what happens above the water and under water, or on the coastline, comprising the issues related to protection, security and defence.

They also encompass all issues related to planning implying matters of urban planning, infrastructure and population management.

The challenges of innovation in the maritime economy are thus at the same time economic, social and environmental.

Maritime innovation addresses several sectors, including those identified for FRI\_START, with value chains and specific markets such as

- ⇒ Energy transition and renewable energies
- ⇒ Climate change adaptation and risk prevention
- ⇒ Agro-food sector
- ⇒ Marine bio-resources and biotechnologies
- ⇒ Defence, maritime safety and security
- ⇒ Protection of marine resources and environments
- ⇒ Nautical activities, tourism and leisure
- ⇒ Boating and shipbuilding

The maritime economy and its ecosystem of innovation is also reflected in a diversity of specific actors: public research organizations working on topics related with sea and shoreline (major national institutes, higher education institutions), major industrial groups and mid-caps and their subcontractors, institutional actors such as the Major Marine Ports.

*b. Innovative project leaders with needs shaped by maritime specificities*

All innovative project leaders share a set of common needs that can be found in all sectors of activity. But some needs are particularly important in the maritime economy:

- ⇒ **Financing:** capital requirements, difficulties in raising funds (many innovations being breakthrough innovations or related to eco-innovations whose markets and business models are still difficult to grasp, funders are more reluctant to provide support and start-ups of the sector find it more difficult to raise private funds)
- ⇒ **Time factor:** some sectors such as biotechnologies or marine renewable energies are part of particularly long developmental delays)
- ⇒ **Complex regulatory framework:** diversity of legal status and operated spaces and facilities, land-sea interface management, ports  
These aspects are even more present in cross-border territories
- ⇒ **Experimentation:** necessary access to sites and experimental infrastructures adapted to carry out viability tests in real operating conditions

The support as well as and the "market approach" factor must take into account this complexity of actors and the technical and use specificities.

For example in the maritime domain: if a start 'up wants to change the harbour's management or the relationship between the creditors and the harbour, it must often take into account the public system and its actors.

Another example concerns the regulation of the maritime sector: in order to use a drone the company is subject to specific regulations - environmental etc.



c. *A value chain beyond the limits of the maritime territory*

However, we must pay attention to the concept of maritime territory and not limit innovation and innovation capacity to the territories and actors located at seashore.

All the support actors located on a maritime territory do not necessarily have competences or a "maritime" specialization and conversely, certain inland territories have incubators or skills allowing to generate innovations intended to feed the value chain of the maritime industry.

It will therefore be important to take into account the industry as a whole with its value chain. Furthermore it is important to open up the possibility to other incubators or business innovation centres, beyond the shoreline and outside Marittimo territory, to join the FRI\_START network as part of the certification process.

2. **Eco-innovation or "green economy", a common thread in FRI\_START's priority sectors: challenges, markets, business model**

While some of FRI\_START's priority sectors may be specifically related to the maritime economy, they can all be linked to the more global eco-innovation or "green economy" sector, which presents major challenges and generates specific business models. It is necessary to know how to apprehend this context as part of the innovative projects support.

Eco-Innovation integrates all the activities and processes aimed at significantly boosting green growth within the territories in order to achieve the economic, energy and ecological transition.

Innovative, income-generating, respectful of the planet and at no additional cost for customers, these activities and solutions developed by start-ups or SMEs anticipate and integrate numerous unavoidable stakes. These stakes or challenges are related with rising raw material and energy costs, biodiversity erosion, Greenhouse Gas (GHG) taxes, and health and environmental regulations

The support mission must therefore set up services and expertise, enabling companies and innovative project leaders to seize these new promising market opportunities, focusing and addressing five areas of activity and major innovations:

- ⇒ Redesign of lightened natural resource offerings
- ⇒ Energy transition and fight against greenhouse gases with renewable energies, management of energy networks, intelligent control systems
- ⇒ Sustainable management of natural capital assets: protection of biodiversity, compensation for damage, awareness rising
- ⇒ Health: Air recycling treatment, "clean" alternatives, natural products
- ⇒ Eco-design: packaging, sustainable production and distribution circuits

**C. Operational objectives and positioning of the FRI\_START quality reference framework**

**The main objective of the quality reference framework**, expected by FRI\_START partners, is to lay the foundations and conditions for a task force group and network-wide activities for a transnational France-Italy territory, to generate and guarantee

- ⇒ a range of expanded and value-added services
- ⇒ shared project support methods
- ⇒ better performances in terms of creation and development of innovative companies with a focus on the programme sectors

**A second objective** could be also that, through this quality approach, we value the partners and their companies by using a brand concept

Finally, a **third medium-term objective** of this quality reference framework will also be to

- ⇒ integrate new partners of the territory or out of territory
- ⇒ be acknowledged by European public or private bodies and obtain financing for companies

On these bases, EBN's recommendation is to reflect on a quality framework that is organized in two parts.

- Which is operational and easy to implement, based
  - ▶ On a qualitative approach of the type "Quality charter" or Brand
  - ▶ On concrete actions and the promotion of work practices
  
- Who specifies the objectives and added value of certification, for example:
  - ▶ The professionalization of the actors
  - ▶ The upscaling of services
  - ▶ Business creation and value creation: creation of new innovative companies, development of existing innovative businesses (turnover, fundraising, job creation ...)
  - ▶ Lobbying and the ability to mobilize or generate new public or private revenues for companies and partner organizations
  
- Which takes into account several dimensions :
  - ▶ The business dimension: missions and services of partners and certified stakeholders
  - ▶ The territorial dimension and ecosystem: the affiliation of the labeled partners to a territory and a specific ecosystem, and their positioning in this ecosystem
  - ▶ The skills dimension: skills and level of expertise of the employees attached to the structures with regard to the specificities of the ecosystem
  - ▶ The "network" dimension: ability to bring collective added-value, to work together, to develop the network outside the territory
  
- Which can eventually be applied to other actors outside the FRI\_START territory

## II. THE CONFIGURATION OF THE COMPONENTS OF THE QUALITY REFERENTIAL FRAMEWORK IT-FR FR START AND CONSTITUTIVE CHARTER: PROPOSALS

It is thus proposed to organize the reference framework "Maritime Certificate FR-IT" according to a model of "Quality Charter" and around 6 major components:

- ▶ Business field
- ▶ Missions
- ▶ Territory and / or maritime ecosystem
- ▶ Links with the ecosystem
- ▶ Skills
- ▶ Collaborative approach and operational network

### A. Components and criteria of the "FRI\_START Network" Quality Charter

To be a signatory of the FRI\_START network Quality Charter, each partner will have

#### 1. To be a support professional for companies and carriers of innovative projects leaders

To be a signatory of the Quality Charter, each partner will have to produce its "identity sheet", presenting its organization, its purpose and its missions in relation to support for companies and innovative projects.

#### 2. Demonstrate and explain its connection and contribution to the value chains of FRI START's priority sectors and demonstrate its ability to dialogue and build operational partnerships with stakeholders and in these value chains

Each partner will have to explain how it participates with its structure in the development of FRI START priority sectors.

For this purpose it will be possible to provide information about three main indicators:

- ▶ Its **affiliation to a specific territorial ecosystem** and **linked to priority sectors** such as the affiliation to a maritime ecosystem
    - ⇒ Description of the innovation ecosystem, of the territory, listing the specific and emblematic actors in specialty areas: key flagship companies, schools, laboratories
  
  - ▶ The **companies and project leaders it supports in these sectors**: quantitative and qualitative data (examples of some success stories)
  
  - ▶ Its **level of integration into the local innovation ecosystem**: partnerships, conventions, participation in governance and decision-making bodies ...
- 3. Professionalize its teams and guarantee the increase in skills of employees on specific topics to support project leaders in the sectors for which needs have been identified**

The Quality Charter will provide three steps to allow partners meet this criteria:

- ▶ When founding the Charter by the founding partners
  - ⇒ Identification of the training needs and specific key areas on which the employees will either have to be trained, to intervene themselves in the field, either to be able to mobilize and interact with experts in the field (port law, cross-border law , environmental law, financing ...
  - ⇒ Set up an ad-hoc training program
  - ⇒ Participation in this training program
  
- ▶ Once the Charter has been signed:
  - ⇒ Commitment to train employees regularly and raise the level of expertise
  - ⇒ Systematic training of any new collaborator joining the structure
  
- ▶ Over time and for partners and actors outside the FRI\_START territory
  - ⇒ Compulsory training (follow-up of FRI\_START training, elaborated within the Charter framework by the founding partners)

#### **4. Commit to working together, and demonstrate this capacity for cooperation with qualitative and quantitative indicators**

The purpose for the signatory partners of the Quality Charter will be to establish an annual action plan which will integrate a series of collective actions in four fields of activity

- ▶ Promoting and updating the shared services platform
- ▶ The collective organization of events dedicated to the innovative companies of the territory
- ▶ Expansion of a local scheme or a strategic partnership at the FRI START scale
- ▶ Collective support for projects, each of the partners having to be able to justify each year its contribution to at least a collegial company support, mobilizing at least one other FRI\_START partner

On this aspect it could be imagined the implementation of a program of annual coaching, collective and on the scale of FRI\_START territory, in the form of call for proposals.

The objective will be to

- ⇒ sourcing projects in FRI\_START priority areas on which there is most work to be done
- ⇒ provide accelerated and value added support for selected companies
- ⇒ promote and develop the FRI\_START network and brand

#### **B. Elaboration of a founding Charter and test**

It is proposed to FRI\_START partners to draft a founding charter as early as 2018 to which it will be attached an annual partnership action plan for 2019. This will be constituting the operational objectives to be met collectively and the reference framework of indicators that will serve as a basis for evaluation.

Each partner will thus have

- ▶ Produce his identity sheet
- ▶ Write an argument note "connection to the value chain of FRI\_START priority sectors "
- ▶ Contribute by the end of 2018 to the production of the annual action plan which will include :
  - ⇒ A training program to follow
  - ⇒ A list of partnership actions to be implemented with their respective indicators of achievement

By signing the charter each partner will commit to contribute to the realization of this action plan, in particular to involve its employees in the planned trainings

Each new year, a new action plan will be implemented, based on the evaluation of the results of the previous one, which will measure the level of involvement of each partner.

### III. CERTIFICATION PROCEDURE: PROPOSALS

The certification method proposed is for two types of actors:

- ▶ The members of FRI\_STRAT, considered as founding members of the quality charter
- ▶ The other actors of the FRI\_STRAT territory or out of territory interested by the network and the certification

The quality process follow-up will be entrusted to the established Quality Board

#### A. The evaluators: the FRI\_START Quality Board

The evaluators in charge of monitoring the follow-up of the approach will be the members of the Quality Board, constituted within the framework of FRI\_STRAT. The Quality Board is composed of a representative of each partner structure.

#### B. The certification procedure

##### 1. For FRI\_START partners: founding members

At each end of the year, an evaluation of the results of the action plan will be carried out and a new action plan will be drawn up, in order to correct the weak points or to respond to the new identified needs.

Each partner will also update their identity sheet and the argument note.

## 2. For new players wishing to join the FRI\_START network

If in the long term new actors of the territory or outside the territory wish to join the FRI\_START network, they will have to submit a simple application form which will include:

- ⇒ The identity sheet
- ⇒ The argument note
- ⇒ A letter of commitment to participate in the implementation of the partnership action plan, including participation in a FRI\_START training program
- ⇒ The payment of an entrance fee:  
A charging principle to enter the network may be considered with, for example, the obligation to participate in a common core "network" training, for a fee.

#### IV. PERSPECTIVE: OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPING CERTIFICATION

In the long term, the FRI\_START certified network, with its results and its quality approach, could consider soliciting new European public partners in order to go further and obtain European recognition and funding for itself and/ or its partners/ companies

#### V. FURTHER STEPS

After validation and possible adjustments to the proposed certification principle, the next steps suggested by EBN for its 2018 mission are:

- ▶ The drafting of articles of the Constitutive Charter
- ▶ Support for the establishment and development of the action plan
- ▶ The elaboration of a framework note describing the specificities of value chains of the proposed FRI\_START priority sectors, which will enable FRI\_START partners to identify
  - ⇒ their needs for knowledge and skills in these areas
  - ⇒ the type of projects and companies to be sourced and supported