Coordination of European Future Internet Forum of Member States and the Collection and Sharing of Research Data to Enhance and Promote National Cooperation

FI-PPP accelerators promotion at national level: recommendations and lessons learned

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1. Introduction

The FIWARE accelerator programme (http://www.fi-ware.org/fiware-accelerator-programme) has 80 M€ to help entrepreneurs to develop their initiatives on Future Internet, based on FIWARE. This programme combines the flexibility of private funding together with the advantages of public funding. It will run from the last semester 2014 to the end of the FI-PPP programme in 2016 and about 1.000 projects are expected to be supported. This goal may be achieved by the creation of a sustainable global open innovation ecosystem.

ceFIMS-connect has identified three issues that need to be addressed in order to facilitate the creation of such ecosystem and ease the success of the FIWARE accelerator programme:

1) The creation of an ecosystem in Future Internet including start-ups, entrepreneurs and SMEs need to be started and fed at local level, even though it has an European scope. **A strong local commitment is required.**

2) FIWARE accelerator programme is formed by 16 accelerators. Even though the main characteristics are common to the 16, each one has its own particularities. Indeed, the FI-PPP programme has its own history, jargon and stakeholders. Entities already familiar with the FI-PPP have a good background, but newcomers as entrepreneurs and start-ups, which will be the actual base of the ecosystem, are mainly not familiar with FI-PPP. **Clear information must be provided in order to let these newcomers know the 16 accelerators and the main tips about the FI-PPP.**

3) Every project under the FIWARE accelerator programme has to actually be built over FIWARE and make use of the enablers. This is an entrance barrier because the entrepreneurs, SMEs and start-ups have to devote resources in order to master FIWARE technical aspects and be able to develop applications on it. Therefore, **providing technical FIWARE training is a challenge.**

Based on ceFIMS-CONNECT experience extracted from different events and actions related to FIWARE and organized mainly in Spain and Poland, we have collected recommendations in this document so the Member States and Associated Countries can apply them in order to improve the impact of their own events, workshop or actions and help to make the most of the FIWARE acceleration programme. Therefore, this document may be used as a tool for the event and workshop organization for the promotion of FIWARE accelerators uptake at national level.

The main events held that have led to these observations were:

- 13th May 2014, Madrid[1]. Plenary. Information and strategy.
- 24th September 2014, Madrid[2]. Accelerator's workshop, plenary + fast bilateral meetings with accelerator's representatives

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[1] http://www.imasdtic.es/es/Inicio/Informacion/Notas_de_prensa/Notas_de_prensa/La-Internet-del-Futuro--la-tecnologi-a-a-implantar-sobre-el-escenario-que-conforman-las-Smart-Cities

[2] http://www.imasdtic.es/es/Inicio/Informacion/Agenda_IDI/Agenda_IDI/Jornada---Oportunidades-para-pymes-en-Internet-dle-Futuro-

- [15th-18th October 2014, Sevilla, Valencia and Las Palmas de Gran Canaria](#)[3]. Multisite event, high level (the Spanish Minister is coming!), includes bootcamps (training) and other side events.
- [23rd October 2014, Poznań, Poland, Accelerators information day and workshop – plenary presentations and accelerators' booths for individual meeting](#)[4]

2. Recommendations

2.1. Defining the event's main objective

Each country has a different degree of familiarity with FI-PPP programme. Depending on this, the event can be designed to give an overview or to go deeper into the details. Here we draft some possible event orientations:

- **Expectative generation.** The objective is to attract newcomers and make the Future Internet ecosystem grow. If entrepreneurs, SMEs and start-ups have never heard about FIWARE before, an overall presentation of the programme is convenient. 80 million € is a good headline to attract them. Normally, this kind of events is appropriate when the calls have not yet been published.
- **Call participation.** The objective is to encourage the audience to apply to the accelerator's calls and to help them to increase their success rate to get funds. This kind of events is appropriate as soon as the calls are published (or even a little earlier if information is already available). The audience will be interested on calls details (dates, funding mechanisms, other advantages and services apart from funding itself, etc). Ideally, these details may be explained by accelerator's representatives, as they will manage the calls. If possible, bilateral meetings or booths can be organized.
- **Training.** The objective is to train people so they can learn FIWARE. We have identified a lack of FIWARE technical knowledge / skills. On the one hand, using FIWARE enablers is a must. On the other hand, many of the accelerators will release the funding budget step by step, so if a project doesn't progress as expected it will be stopped in time in order to avoid spending budget. This means that programming skills are crucial, and projects success during the execution phase will depend on their FIWARE technical mastering, among other factors. Training events are welcome at any moment in the calendar.
- **Supporting FI projects and results.** The objective is to support already executing or finished projects (not proposals) and to encourage new entities to join FIWARE and develop projects using its enablers. This can be done at national level by means of prizes to ongoing projects or results, deploying national instruments for funding FI projects (addressed both to new projects or already existing quality projects initially

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[3] http://www.fi-ware.org/multisiteevent/
[4] http://www.fiware.pl/poznan2014/

funded by the FIWARE accelerators but having been discarded in an early or intermediate stage). Facilitate access to private funding (incubators, etc) for graduated projects is also very welcome. These supporting FI projects' actions will be appropriate to do during 2015, specially from half year onwards when first results will be available.

2.2. Institutional messages

If possible, high level representatives from public administration can be invited to open the event. The audience, before making the decision of involving themselves in the FIWARE programme, needs some conviction and assurance. Nobody knows for sure if FIWARE will success, but entrepreneurs, SMEs and start-ups will feel much more confident if a high level representative let them know that:

- FIWARE is an European initiative widely supported
- FIWARE is also supported at national level within their country

It is always convenient to have representatives from the EC and/or Ministry responsible of ICT or Internet issues. If the commitment of the Administration can be explained not only by words, but also with specific national facilities and/or programmes with a given budget, the effect will be much better. Showing coherence between European and national strategies regarding Future Internet will inspire the audience to get involved in FIWARE.

2.3. Finding newcomers

You may have already a database with contacts from companies, Universities and research centres that usually participate in European programmes. They are always interesting to keep and inform about your event. But most entrepreneurs, very small SMEs and start-ups have never applied to public funding at European level. Therefore, the invitation to your event must be sent not only to the contacts you may already have, but also through new channels. Find local incubators, business angel's networks and associations that are close to private capital to reach new profiles that may build the Future Internet ecosystem, together with the very valuable contacts you may already have. An active involvement of such networks and association in promoting and reminding about the event is very helpful.

2.4. Identifying speakers

Speakers from the accelerators are very appropriate, as they are the people that can better explain them in detail as they will manage the accelerator's calls. There are 16 accelerators numbering near 100 partners within their consortiums from almost all Europe. The first step is to identify the entities working within the management consortium of the accelerators, and invite them. Audience will feel comfortable if they receive information from a person/entity

from the same country and in their own language, keeping always in mind that the accelerator programme is European. However, even if national speakers are not available, the presence of European representatives at an event is highly beneficial to the audience (as we learned e.g.from the Polish FIWARE workshop).

<u>Speakers from other entities</u> that have already participated in previous FI-PPP phases is also very interesting. Again, finding them in the local environment and inviting them are important bullet points to include in the "to do list". They can be:

- Partners in any FI-PPP project (either main calls and open calls)
- Participants in previous FIWARE hackathons

2.5. Event structure

Depending on the objective of each event (or session), a given structure will be more convenient.

Event or session objective	Suggested structure
Expectative generation	Plenary with speakers (keynote and/or roundtable), better if questions for audience are allowed. If many speakers invited, a pragmatic approach can be to start with a series of short presentations followed by joint question and answer session.
Call participation	Plenary with experts giving calls details plus one to one meetings where a project can be explained individually to an expert in order to get orientation and feedback.
Training	Computer room to allow actual practice and playing with FIWARE.
Supporting FI projects and results	Information plenary (for explaining new public funding instruments), show case / exhibition / booths (to show projects results or prototypes), investment forums (to facilitate access to private funding), awards…

2.6. Capturing interest on FIWARE

If the attendees are newcomers, a good way to capture their interest is to organise the information following the next schema:

- First, inviting speakers to tell 2 or 3 success stories using FIWARE. If an entrepreneur or start-up (someone the audience can empathize with) tells its own story about how it took advantage of FIWARE, the attendees normally will figure out better how

involving in FIWARE could suit for their own case. Also a good starting point for newcomers is to provide them with practical examples of existing applications build using FIWARE components, e.g. SmartTaxi.

- Then, explaining the accelerator funding instruments and details. As the audience has previously listened to success stories, they will be more sensitive to this practical information.

2.7. Managing attendees

The best way to manage attendees is channelling them though a registration form. A very valuable contact information will be collected, as they are the actual Future Internet ecosystem. It is important to notify them that their data will be collected in a database and used for further communications regarding Future Internet (according to each country personnel data management law).

If bilateral meetings are offered, we recommend to use an electronic tool for automatically manage the timetable, as they can be quite complex. According to our experience, a 15 minutes meeting is enough for an entrepreneur to explain a project to the expert, and receive feedback. The main advantage is that a one to one meeting is informal and fast. A very important point to take into account if bilateral meetings are going to be offered, is to make a good match between accelerators and project proposers: most accelerators address concrete themes or priorities. For example, a project initiative focused on digital content may arrange a meeting with FI-C3, but normally it will not make sense to meet with SmartAgriFood2. So the previous matching matters.

2.8. Information post-event

Once the event is finished, the best practice is to make the slides and other information available on the web, and communicate the entire attendees database (and other contacts regarding Future Internet) how they can access/download these information. Related events and further events may be communicated to this database. Also recording of event is highly recommended, especially for those participant who cannot attend the meetings. For large videos, an index pointing different parts or highlighting relevant fragments is recommended.

2.9. Cracking the skills barrier

One of the main reasons why entrepreneurs, SMEs and start-ups vacillate whether apply or not to FIWARE accelerator programme is that using FIWARE enablers is a must. There are some recommendations about this:

- Show that there is a strong commitment from the EC and from your own country with FIWARE.

- Give information about the next training opportunities for training: it is always a good idea to organize training sessions at local level if possible.
- Be sincere: if the is someone does not believe on FIWARE, is better not to apply to this programme.

2.10. Additional recommendations

FI-PPP accelerators' promotion is not only about getting FI-PPP 3rd phase budget. MS/AC must go for using FIWARE. Some suggestions for potential use of FIWARE in national programmes were given at the MEETING OF THE TWELVTH FIF (Berlin, 21st October 2014). We consider them very wise so we list them below:

1. Raising awareness/visibility: Meetings with decision makers in the public sector and industry, press-releases by your organisation, events and workshops, articles in media and magazines.

2. Install FIWARE on a national infrastructure. Identify infrastructure owners such as Smart Cities or innovation organisations.

3. Top-up one of the existing Future Internet Accelerators with additional funding (e.g. joint calls). See overview of the 16 accelerators.

4. Set-up a national Future Internet Accelerator.

5. Create a national Future Internet Challenge, similar previous challenges held already, for instance within a certain sector such as Smart Cities, etc.

6. Motivate national (industrial) FIWARE champions, either to be general FIWARE providers or sector-specific platforms providers.

Most of the FIWARE accelerators release funding step by step, discarding and qualifying projects in each step. It is very important to distinguish among the following two cases for a given discarded project:

1. The project has been discarded because, even if it is very good, other projects were even better and there were not room / budget for all.
2. The project has been discarded because it didn't reach the thresholds.

We recommend the accelerators to provide this information for each discarded project, so the good ones (case 1) have a kind of "quality badge" or report that helps them to get supported at national levels. This badge will be also very useful for national administrations and private investors to know about the projects and decide whether keep supporting them or not.

2.11. Training / Assistance offered on running of FIWARE accelerate events

As a support project to the FIF, ceFIMS-CONNECT could look at extending this work as an value added service, by adding an email address and/or web form and/or direct contact also, where we could offer advice and contacts (as far as we can) for MS/AC key actors in Future Internet willing to organize "FIWARE accelerate" related events or workshops. We would be interested in organising this service if the FIF members felt it would be useful.

3. Calendar orientations

Section 2.1 in this document (defining the event's main objective) gives orientations about the recommended dates for the events depending on their objectives. We consider the timeline on the following page as presented in the MEETING OF THE TWELVTH FIF (Berlin, 21st October 2014) very useful, as it gives information about the FIWARE accelerator's calls and can be used as a reference in order to plan such events. We recommend you to also visit the accelerators websites to check if there is additional information updates about the calendar.

The complete listing of FIWARE accelerator web sites can be found at http://www.cefims.eu/2014/10/fiware-accelerator-programme-launch/.