Factory of Knowledge
Spreading the culture of innovation into small and medium enterprises

**Key characteristics**

Factory of Knowledge is a community of enterprises and knowledge providers, including universities, launched and animated by Confindustria Veneto SIAV, to share and support the culture of innovation translated in tangible results within small and medium enterprises. SIAV is the service agency of the regional Association of Entrepreneurs in Veneto (over 12 000 companies, mainly SMEs).

Three main fields of activity:
- a. innovation observatory;
- b. applied research;
- c. enterprises interventions.

Interventions include:
- a. creativity for innovation;
- b. open innovation/absorptive capacity;
- c. methodologies for innovation process within SMEs, e.g. technological road mapping;
- d. technological transfer, design, new materials;
- e. skills for innovation.

**Identity**

Three SME innovation stories


F.lli Poli: Excellence competences from Ford (1968) to advanced mechanical technologies, production of dies. Second generation innovative 3D metal cutting for furniture; new product development: heat sink for LED lamps. Strategy for innovation supported by training, networks with mechanical and design enterprises.

Sigma: Born as B2B company working steel wire, now innovating to access B2C markets with new product development. Strong investment in creativity training to develop innovation and support marketing strategies, successful cooperation with on-demand online design platforms.

**Drivers & objectives**

In the Veneto Region, there are 457 225 active enterprises; manufacturing sectors range from footwear to aerospace suppliers; 95% SMEs; high entrepreneurship rate: one company per every 10 inhabitants; unemployment rate (2015): 6.6%; low rate of investments in R&D and innovation (regional scoreboard of innovation). To promote innovation, the Factory of Knowledge community identifies and analyses business models in SMEs to support knowledge and technology transfer through company-based training actions.

**Innovativeness**

The Factory of Knowledge is a community that integrates complementary perspectives, competences and tools, for innovation within SMEs. Alliances with universities, research centres and industry include ongoing cooperation with regional/national policy-makers for regional growth and development. It includes soft technology transfer tools such as the broker of innovation, coupled with work-based training and learning actions.

**Tackling skill mismatch**

Actions to reduce mismatch between innovation strategy and required skills for innovation in 3 SMEs.

API: Strategy for innovation is successfully supported by infrastructure and human resource investments. Training for R&D, sales, business development.

F.lli Poli: Training actions aim to overcome two barriers to innovation: ageing workforce and limited skills to introduce the new product in the market (last mile).

Sigma: Upskilling of sales and marketing staff to develop creativity, ensure coherent market analysis for new products and support organisational change.

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