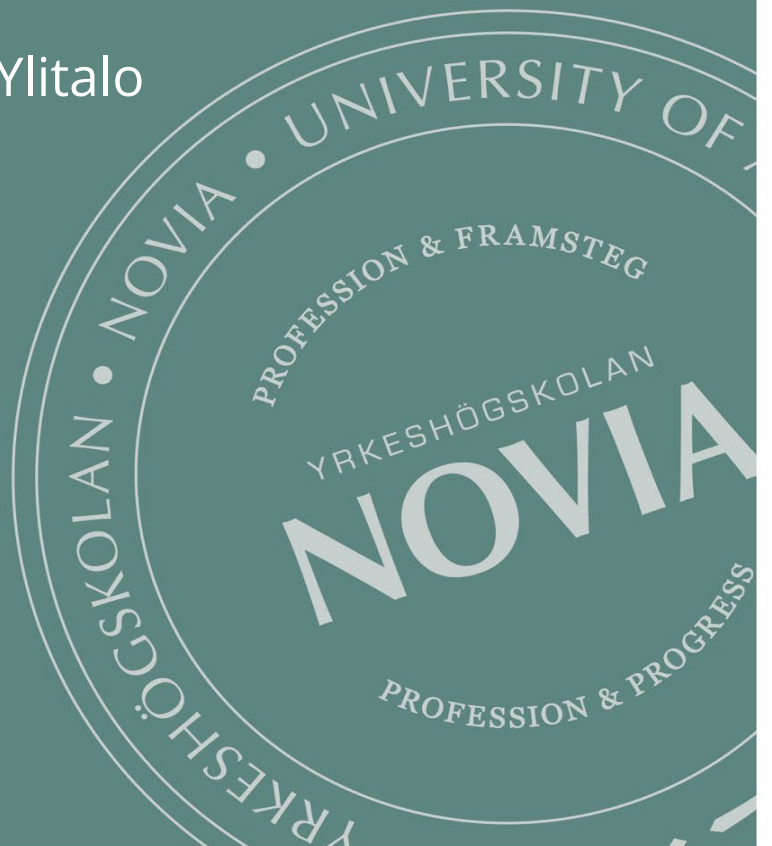


# Business Creation and Competence Centre Building

Lessons Learnt from the NoICE Project

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Serie R: Rapporter





## BUSINESS CREATION AND COMPETENCE CENTRE BUILDING - LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE NOICE PROJECT

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## **Abstract**

Competence centres are long-term research and innovation structures that aim to strengthen collaborations, increase communication, and support innovations. During 2018 – 2022, the Botnia-Atlantica funded project NoICE – Nordic Icing Centre of Expertise aimed to establish a long-lasting competence centre focusing on atmospheric icing.

There are several steps involved in creating a successful competence centre. This report describes this process during NoICE, from initial learnings from other competence centres to applying the knowledge, understanding stakeholder’s needs, working with network building, and launching the centre.

As could be seen from the case NoICE, the project managed well with achieving many of its intermediate goals on the way towards building a long-lasting competence centre. However, the biggest challenge of ensuring long-term funding could not be solved during the project time. All competence centres have their unique challenges and characteristics. By documenting and sharing the lessons learnt during NoICE, the project group at Novia hopes to support future centre initiatives by publishing and providing insights from this particular centre build.

**Key words:** Competence centre, centre building, icing, network building

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## 1. Introduction

Cooperating and working together has many benefits, and by joining forces and exchanging knowledge and ideas, the outputs and innovations of a cooperation can far exceed the individual partner's own efforts. Business networks, clusters and industry ecosystems are all examples of businesses working together and creating added value for both themselves and others, and by taking part in R&D projects and collaborations, even smaller companies with more limited resources can benefit and gain new insights and ideas.

The quintuple innovation helix framework describes a model in which universities, industry, government, civil society and the environment interacts and exchanges knowledge, leading to innovation and development of the society as a whole. The role of innovation in society cannot be emphasized enough, as it supports societal progress and growth and increases the standard of living for its citizens by providing jobs and better possibilities. It is therefore not surprising that many countries focus on improving their innovation capacity and readiness by establishing national programs, partaking in international programs, and putting aside money for supporting and building structures for innovation. Competence centres are one of these structures, and Interreg Botnia-Atlantica is one of these supporting programs.

This report focuses on the Botnia-Atlantica funded project NoICE – Nordic Icing Centre of Expertise, a project that was active between 2018 – 2022 where the main objectives were *“establishing a centre of expertise in atmospheric icing”* and creating *“a long lasting, well-functioning, competence centre focused on minimizing industry and public sector icing problems in the BA region”*.<sup>1</sup> The report begins by describing the background to competence centres and what lessons have been learned from studying similar efforts in both the Botnia-Atlantica area as well as Sweden and Finland in general. It then portrays the particular case NoICE and what steps have been taken in order to establish the Nordic Icing Centre of Expertise. Finally, the report rounds off by presenting the outcomes, lessons learnt and recommendations from the case study NoICE.

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<sup>1</sup> NoICE project application and project plan, 2018

## **2. Building Competence Centres in the Botnia-Atlantica program area**

Interreg Botnia-Atlantica was an EU program that funded cross-border cooperation projects in Finland, Sweden and Norway with the aim to increase innovation capacity, strengthen the business communities as well as develop the natural and cultural heritage in the program area. During the period 2014 – 2020, the focus of the Botnia-Atlantica program was divided into four priorities; innovation, business, environment and transport, where each of the priorities had their specific objectives and aims. <sup>2</sup>

Within the innovation priority, focus was put on

- (1) Developing long-term sustainable competence centres, and
- (2) Increased implementation of innovative solutions.

By focusing on the building of long-term research and innovation structures and competence centres, the goal was to strengthen the collaboration in the area, both between different actors and fields as well as cross-border and interdisciplinary, to increase communication and to create competitive environments and long-term structures for innovation. <sup>3</sup>

During the program period, several innovation projects focusing on building competence centres were accepted and initiated, with NoICE being one of them.

### **2.1 General definitions and purposes of Competence Centres and Centres of Excellence**

Interreg Europe defines a **Centre of Competence (CoC)** as

*"A structured, long-term research and innovation (R&I) collaboration in*

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.botnia-atlantica.eu/about-the-programme/four-priorities/>, accessed 4.2.2022

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.botnia-atlantica.eu/assets/7/Uploads/Programdokument.pdf>, accessed 10.1.22

*strategically important areas between academia and industry with frequent interactions with the public sector”<sup>4</sup>*

The Competence Centre is often located in a university environment and the focus lies on collaborative and applied research in association with the regional businesses and industries. Whereas a **Centre of Excellence (CoE)** is more focused on creating cutting-edge research and developing first-class research environments, the Competence Centre’s main objectives revolve around the strengthening of university- industry collaborations and bonds in strategic sectors<sup>4</sup>, as well as the provision of an infrastructure for knowledge organization and transfer.<sup>5</sup>

Even though the theoretical definitions vary between a Competence Centre and a Centre of Excellence, the terms are in practicality used interchangeably to describe a research and innovation collaboration where participants from the academia, industry and the public are brought together by a specific theme or topic. In some of the cases, the collaborations are more academic in nature, whereas the industry is more active in other coalitions.

## **2.2 Competence centres within the Botnia-Atlantica program**

During the active program period 2014 – 2020, eight projects with the specific objective to develop long-lasting, sustainable competence centres were initiated in the Botnia-Atlantica area. Each with their own theme and approach. By establishing a cross-border competence centre, either virtually or physically, the main project goals were usually focusing on the exchange and sharing of best practices and new research and knowledge in the networks, further strengthening and developing the cooperation between the academia, industry and the public in the area, as well as supporting regional companies and industries.<sup>6</sup>

In order to gain valuable learnings and tips on how to build a successful and lasting centre structure, NoICE project personnel contacted several of the project leaders from already completed projects. Whereas no answers were received through the sent-out emails, face-

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<sup>4</sup> [https://www.interregeurope.eu/policylearning/news/7724/accelerating-the-innovation-process-through-centres-of-competence/?no\\_cache=1&cHash=71436d53a25c4e89131154fff7c5836a](https://www.interregeurope.eu/policylearning/news/7724/accelerating-the-innovation-process-through-centres-of-competence/?no_cache=1&cHash=71436d53a25c4e89131154fff7c5836a), accessed 10.1.22

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.4ch-project.eu/what-is-a-competence-centre/>, accessed 10.1.22

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.botnia-atlantica.eu/om-beviljade-projekt/projektbank/?SearchCategory=17&SearchMode=0>, accessed 4.2.2022

to-face discussions with former project leaders pointed to difficulties with maintaining the interest and keeping up the centre's work after the project period and financing had ended. As was seen when trying to visit some of the centre's webpages and getting in touch, many of the centres seemed to no longer be active, which made it hard to extract any useful information on successful centre building from the previous projects.

### **2.3 Other competence centre efforts in the Sweden and Finland**

When turning the gaze outside the Botnia-Atlantica area, there has been several other efforts and programs targeting competence centre building.

Vinnova is Sweden's innovation agency that strives to build and strengthen the Swedish innovation capacity by annually investing 3 billion SEK into research and innovation.<sup>7</sup> Vinnova's first Competence centre program was active in 1995-2007 and followed up by the VINN Excellence program (2004-2016). The latest competence centre program started in 2015, through which elected centres are able to receive five years of funding with the possibility for an extra funding period of five years after partaking in an international evaluation. As of February 2022, 13 competence centres are active and receiving support from Vinnova.<sup>8</sup>

In Sweden, Energimyndigheten also works with strengthening the cooperation between businesses, the public sector and the academia through financing competence centres. In December 2021, 11 competence centres were chosen to share 594 million SEK during five years. In addition to the funding from Energimyndigheten, the centres also receive support from universities, research institutes, the public sector and businesses, totalling up the funding budget to 1.8 billion SEK.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.vinnova.se/en/about-us/vart-uppdrag/>, accessed 4.2.22

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.vinnova.se/m/kompetenscentrum/>, accessed 4.2.22

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.energimyndigheten.se/forskning-och-innovation/forskning/omraden-for-forskning/kompetenscentrum-2022-2026/>, accessed 7.2.22



In Finland, a Competence centre program (OSKE – Osaamiskeskusohjelma) was started in 1994 by the government of Finland, with the aim to promote and strengthen the innovation activities. The program became more cluster-based in 2007, before it was ended in 2013.<sup>10,11</sup>

Other, explicit Finnish competence centre initiatives could not be found; however, the Academy of Finland runs Centre of Excellence (CoE) programmes focusing on supporting first-rate research communities for a maximum period of eight years, with the first program having been launched in 2000. Between 2018 – 2025, twelve centres were chosen through the program, whereas eleven centres were selected by the Academy of Finland for the Finnish Centre of Excellence Programme 2022 – 2029.<sup>12</sup>

## 2.4 Learnings from studying other competence centres

The previously mentioned Vinnova agency regularly evaluates their ongoing competence centres, and in their report “Third evaluation of VINN Excellence Centres” (2016)<sup>13</sup> several observations on the competence centre program and the centres could be drawn. Among these, the following insights were of especial interest when it comes to achieving successful, long-term competence centres:

- The 10- year funding proved to be important, as even the best of centres needed time to build their high-impact cooperation with industry
- A well-articulated vision, mission and strategy was found in the best performing centres
- Reviews at each centre stage provided valuable feedback to the centres, and so did the International Scientific Advisory Boards (ISAB)
- The importance of all partners having a good understanding of the other partners motivations, contributions, and expectations of the centre

It was also noted that some centres would benefit from professional aid when it comes to commercialisation or technology transfer, in order to better build the industry collaborations.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://fi.wikipedia.org/wiki/Osaamiskeskusohjelma>, accessed 9.2.22

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.tekniikkatalous.fi/uutiset/osaamiskeskusohjelma-paatty-tyontekijoille-jaetaan-lahtopasseja/0d089690-7fcf-3b3f-9758-17ae748238d0>, accessed 9.2.22

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.aka.fi/en/research-funding/programmes-and-other-funding-schemes/finnish-centres-of-excellence/>, accessed 7.2.22

<sup>13</sup> O’Kane, M. et al. (2016) *Third Evaluation of VINN Excellence Centres*. Vinnova Report VR 2016:01. Vinnova – Swedish Governmental Agency for Innovation Systems.

From the Finnish side, information about the participating centres in the previous OSKE competence centre program was difficult to retrieve due to the OSKE homepage having seized to exist. The program, however, was continuously evaluated while it was ongoing, and according to a summary by Pelkonen et al (2010)<sup>14</sup>, the competence centre program was successful and managed quite well with reaching its goals as there had been an increase in know-how and technology level, cooperation, and increased preparedness to utilize R&D resources as a result. The overlapping with other political instruments as well as some competence centre's weaker results were found to be some of the drawbacks.

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<sup>14</sup> Pelkonen, A. et al. (2010), *Osaamisklusterit alueiden voimien yhdistäjänä – Osaamiskeskusohjelman (2007–2013) väliarviointi*. Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriön julkaisuja, Innovaatiot 44/2010. Edita Publishing Oy.

### **3. Work with Establishing the Nordic Icing Centre of Expertise**

As mentioned, NoICE was an innovation project in the Interreg Botnia-Atlantica program where the main goal was to build a long-lasting competence centre. In the project application, it was further specified that the centre would continue as a self-supporting company after the project period has ended. Initially, companies and other stakeholders in the Botnia-Atlantica area were the target group, but it was also planned that the NoICE company would expand its communications to the Arctic areas and operate more internationally.

The NoICE project was divided into seven work packages, namely

- WP1 – Communications and Knowledge Transfer
- WP2 – Project Leading / Management
- WP3 – Centre Communication Networks Development
- WP4 – Icing Problem Case Studies
- WP5 – Centre Capabilities Documentation
- WP6 – Operating Centre
- WP7 – Centre Continuation

and as the goal was to build a long-lasting competence centre that would outlive the project, much resources were dedicated to the business development phase, in this case, building the structures needed, creating business networks as well as preparing for the launch and operation of the NoICE company. The business development therefore included activities such as hiring a business manager, analysing the market and the demand, choosing the company form, defining the business idea, forming a business plan and gaining and engaging customers.

#### **3.1 Business development and creating a business plan**

In June 2021, a business manager was appointed, and business development meetings started to be held on a regular basis. Within the centre, the business manager holds a key role as she provides stability and coherence, is responsible for the business expansion and

operation, creates personal contacts to the industry as well as oversees and delegates the work among the centre participants and partners. During the project period, the main tasks, among others, consisted of creating a business plan, tying contacts and gaining customers as well as securing longer-term funding of the business.

In order to aid the business manager in her job, external services were used for mapping the local situation and aiding in the network building. Consultancy was received from two companies during the business development phase, one located in Ostrobothnia, Finland and one in Westrobothnia, Sweden. In addition to their assigned, investigative tasks, the consultants also participated in the business development meetings, kept regular individual meetings with the business manager and provided valuable knowledge and input about the local business sector on their respective side of Kvarken.

On the Swedish side, Anske AB has produced three valuable reports on business development:

1. DE-ICING AND ITS BUSINESS PROCESSES
2. DE-ICING AND ANTI-ICING FROM OFFER TO BUSINESS
3. NoICE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT - Recommendations & Templates

These reports are based on an ongoing dialog between Anske AB, the project leaders and the business manager of NoICE, and with potential customers and cooperation partners.

On the Finnish side, Merinova Oy Ab has worked with identifying relevant business and research partners (see next chapter) as well as developing a business model for the centre. The work provided valuable inputs about the target industries and sectors, which was further incorporated and used as a basis for the NoICE business plan. Merinova Oy Ab also provided feedback and aid with refining said business plan and shared their recommendations on potential first affairs and pilot projects that could be of interest.

The business plan was finalized in 2021, and further pinpointed the vision, mission and purpose of the NoICE company. It defined the expertise as well as the centre services and products, and presented the results of the market analysis and the potential customers and target groups. A sales and marketing plan was made, as well as a plan and budget for the financial and operational management.

### **3.2 Market analysis and forming networks**

During 10 months in year 2019, Merinova Oy Ab contacted hundreds of companies in various sectors and business areas mainly located in the regions of Central Ostrobothnia, Ostrobothnia and South Ostrobothnia. They identified 14 companies that have experienced problems with icing and/or snow and NoICE has since then maintained contact with these companies. This investigative work not only contributed to building up the NoICE network, but also provided a valuable market analysis of the current situation and trends in the region.

In 2021, Merinova Oy Ab prepared a new list of several hundred companies to invite to the centre launch event as well as a list of relevant business and research partner to further collaborate with. As the launching event was held online due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it was possible to invite participants from an even bigger, geographical area than the Botnia-Atlantica region. The contacted companies were also asked to fill in a form and join the NoICE network.

During the business development work with Anske AB many potential customers and cooperation partners were identified, and several business processes were started.

Forming networks takes time. During the project period, frequent contact and communication was maintained with the identified target companies, both through emails, phone calls and online interaction and presence. LinkedIn has been an important channel when building the network and getting in touch with both companies and academia, and in February 2022, the NoICE account reached 100 followers. Through LinkedIn, information about the project's research as well as upcoming events have been shared and spread within the networks. The homepages and portal have also been valuable channels to share information with the target group, and articles and ads published in papers in Sweden and Finland has made it possible to reach an even wider audience.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, face-to-face interactions with companies have been more limited than expected, however, the transition to a more virtual and connected way of working and the organizing of online events has also made it possible to connect people regardless of location. It has also lowered the threshold to partake in the workshops and activities.

### **3.3 Centre financing and operation**

As one of the goals of the centre was to create a long-lasting structure that continues to function after the project financing has ended, it has been of great importance to allocate

enough resources to prepare for the operational stage and to continuously work with this goal in mind. According to the NoICE Continuation Business Model<sup>15</sup> created in connection with the NoICE project plan, the key points were to implement a non-profit company with three income streams:

- Industry partner membership fees (2500€ per company/year)
- Centre/industry alliance projects, where the centre works with companies to solve specific, icing-related problems and gets project revenues (increasing during the years)
- University support structure (in total roughly 10 000€/ partner university divided on four years)

Based on these financial assumptions, it was estimated that the revenues would exceed the operational costs (mainly salary for the fulltime business manager, office location rent and other operational expenses) during the centre's third year. Even though this model was refined later on, two years of support, loans or donations were deemed essential in order for the centre to break even during the initial time period, and to be able to form long-term business collaboration and build a strong reputation making it possible for the centre to survive without any additional support from the third year of operation.

The official centre launch was held in November 2021 where the centre was kicked off with an online launching event. Optimally, a company would have been registered prior to the launch, however, as the work with ensuring financial support after the project period was still in progress, and operational forms and structures were still under development, it made more sense to wait with the juridical founding of the company until the questions had been handled and solved.

#### **4. Outcomes and Lessons Learnt from the Centre Building Activities within NoICE**

As could be seen during the project, the target group has, in general, thought that research and development for solving icing issues is needed. Needs for the development were obvious and they were supported well during the project. Icing causes problems in different industrial areas and applications and therefore, there are clear needs for new solutions and deeper understanding of affecting factors when operating in cold climate conditions. The project worked intensely with several case studies to solve real icing issues brought to the project groups attention by the companies themselves, and the project has succeeded well in the bi-directional communication with these problem owners. The case studies were successful

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<sup>15</sup> Nordic Icing Centre of Expertise Business Model (BUSMOD), 2018, internal document

and targeted the project goals and have also shown that the centre is needed and relevant for the target group.

During the project, and especially during the work with establishing a sustainable centre as a not-for-profit company, several obstacles have however been identified. These have prevented the funding of the company during the project duration. Each independent obstacle might not have prevented the centre as a company, but together they exacerbate the situation in a way that make achieving financial sustainability impossible. However, the work with preparing the start-up of the company is still valid, and the goal continues to be to overcome these obstacles through future projects.

#### **4.1 Ensuring financing**

The funding of the project stops immediately after the project period, and costs that are related to running the centre are not covered after the project period. Getting a business started generally requires funding for a longer period of time, hence ensuring funding for the centre was of utmost priority for its success. As previously noted, the NoICE business model assumed income from three separate streams; membership fees, centre/industry alliance projects and university support structures in order to be able to break even and survive during the first two years of operation.

Even though much work was done with identifying companies having icing issues that could become paying centre members, many of the companies within the target group, especially in Ostrobothnia, consisted of small or even micro-sized enterprises, who did not possess the resources to participate in and fund a centre. These companies had an interest in the issue, and continuous discussions were held with them during the project period, however, they would benefit more from a different model of operation, such as a development project for the specific issues. As could be seen, the target group wanted to take part in the information, results and centre activities, but it was not possible for them to commit themselves in terms of resources and time.

When it came to the centre/industry alliance projects, discussions were held with several larger companies. During the project time, templates and guides for how to approach companies and pitch the centre and its knowhow were created, and during the business development phase, a large number of companies were contacted in order to pick out the ones belonging to the target group of having icing issues. Building trust and landing an alliance does however take longer time than could be covered within the project time frame,

and even though discussions were held and are still ongoing with several actors, any concrete contracts could not be signed during the project period. In addition to this, companies and the academia often have different ways of working and different time perception. Not being able to show reference cases and concrete results from other company cooperation's might therefore also have affected the centres credibility and job landing negatively.

Thirdly, the business model was counting on the support from the partner universities during the initial years. Unfortunately, the universities themselves were not too enthusiastic about partaking in the centre. Novia UAS did not want to be an owner of the company and didn't have the right or the motivation to give donation to the company either. NoICE was considered to be an undertaking too risky to take. Even without economical obligations, it was difficult to even identify other potential owners as similar messages were received from the other partner universities.

Due to all of this, other potential financing bodies and means were investigated during the project time. Contact was taken with the local organisation in Vaasa that grants start-up support to businesses, however, their support money could only be used by private individuals and were not applicable to the NoICE centre. A loan was not considered a good idea, as this would have forced a personal, financial risk on the participants and project group. The lookout for further project proposals and founding is however ongoing as the centre has not given up on pursuing its long-term goals.

As could be seen from the competence centre examples from the Vinnova centres, the centres were provided funding for the first five to ten years of operation. Starting a centre in a 2-3-year project and effectively having only about 6 months of time to reach financial sustainability can therefore be considered too challenging and too optimistic, especially in combination with all other mentioned hurdles.

## **4.2 Tying the right competences to the centre**

The project was carried out by a range of interdisciplinary university partners, each with their own key specialties and expertise. This widened the prospects and views and created a good environment to work with complex issues such as icing. By connecting different experts to focus on the same problematic area, the know-how increased and made it possible to faster understand and connect different relevant aspects e.g., from business, technical, environmental and materials point of views. This created a strong foundation for the operation of the competence centre. The competence centre was further to be run by a



fulltime business manager, whereas the consultancy and icing research was to be conducted by the researchers tied to the centre. This was however not without its challenges.

On one hand, the management, the business developers as well as the experts/researchers had no intentions of abandoning their fulltime positions at their current organizations or universities. Many of the key actors in the project group are accomplished academics, with a position in the universities which they feel carry a certain responsibility. This means that they do not necessarily want to fragment their role by being a business owner. On the other hand, having no inhouse expertise also means that there are limited possibilities for NoICE to run and grow the business as almost all the knowledge has to be bought, making the running costs high and survival difficult. Having to hire the experts as consultants on an hourly basis also means that they have no obligation to accept a job and won't necessarily have time nor be available. This makes it difficult for the business manager to make promises and coordinate potential business collaboration projects. Making contracts and agreements about renting personnel from the partner universities can also be a tricky process, depending on the university specific policies and rules.

Another disadvantage is that the project did not include any partners from the industry or experienced start-up actors. The academic mindset is more focused on proving a solution and presenting the background data, as opposed to an entrepreneurial mindset where risks are more acceptable. An ambitious drive to start a company, succeed or fail, would have been needed. Similarly, having a project partner with a business background could have benefitted the centre's business development. This as a more innovation- driven and market-focused approach could have provided valuable insights and inputs during the business creation phases.

### **4.3 Other factors affecting the success of the centre**

During the project time, NoICE has created a cross-border working environment where interdisciplinary collaboration around the complex issues of icing have taken place. This structure has improved and strengthened the networks, communication and exchange of information when it comes to icing research, both in the region and internationally, and continues to provide a good foundation to build upon in future projects. By talking about icing issues with companies as well as sharing the latest research and bringing new methods to the target groups, the project has spread awareness, encouraged companies to take icing issues seriously and helped them make more informed decisions and choices. This is all

important results and supports the centre status as an important actor in icing related matters in the Botnia-Atlantica region.

In addition to the difficulties with securing long-term funding and connecting the right experts to the centre, there were also other obstacles making it difficult to achieve the NoICE company. As pointed out by the external project evaluator MDI, the financier body Botnia-Atlantica did not have an unambiguous definition of what they were looking for in a successfully implemented competence centre. This made it more difficult for the project to get the right help, resources and aid during the centre building. The Botnia-Atlantica funding also stipulates that the NoICE company could not make profit on the results for a certain time after the project, which meant that the company had to be operated as a non-profit company for the first years. This made it harder to attract investors and to get the necessary capital, and it also made it more difficult to operate and grow the business as caution was needed when it comes to not growing too much or in the wrong way. In order for the centre to work optimally, another business model might hence be needed.

## 5. Conclusions

During the project period, the project managed well with achieving many of the intermediate goals on its way towards building a long-lasting competence centre. During the network building phase, target companies, stakeholders as well as future collaborators were identified, and this mapping also worked as a good starting point for the centre. Both as it provided actual, regional case studies to work with and because of the possibilities to spread the word about the icing centre and its capabilities. The centre appointed a business manager to aid its development and created structures as well as routines for the operation. The centre operations were further defined and refined in a business plan, which was used when looking for centre investors, partners as well as future customers and clients.

The biggest hurdle to solve was however how to ensure a long-term funding. It had become evident during the project period that the long-term success of the centre was dependent on a strong financial foundation. This was also supported by studying other competence centre efforts. The funding was difficult to achieve while adhering to the not-for profit principle as well as rules, legislation and start-up funding. These challenges have also been noted by other actors, such as in the external evaluation of the funding program. In order to fulfil the planned financing model, it would have been of importance to include the university

partners at an earlier stage and create more engagement among the actors. The project would also have benefitted from involving the business manager from the beginning of the project, which could have added a more business and entrepreneurial approach from the beginning. A longer project time would have enabled this.

Even though the NoICE company could not be founded during the project period due to uncertainties in funding and ownership, the centre has not given up on pursuing its long-term goals. It now also has a business plan, continuation plans and an already built network and structure to utilize. Discussions are ongoing with several companies, and several actors have expressed their interest in future cooperation and collaborations with the centre. Applying for regional project funding for solving the most frequently occurring icing issues will therefore be NoICE's next step.

YRKESHÖGSKOLAN  
**NOVIA**

Yrkeshögskolan Novia har ca 4500 studerande och personalstyrkan uppgår till ca 320 personer. Novia är den största svenskspråkiga yrkeshögskolan i Finland som har examensinriktad ungdoms- och vuxenutbildning, utbildning som leder till högre yrkeshögskoleexamen samt fortbildning och specialiseringsutbildning. Novia har utbildningsverksamhet i Vasa, Jakobstad, Raseborg och Åbo.

Yrkeshögskolan Novia är en internationell yrkeshögskola, via samarbetsavtal utomlands och internationalisering på hemmaplan. Novias styrka ligger i närvaron och nätverket i hela Svenskfinland.

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