



NEWSLETTER, ISSUE 5 | JANUARY 2024

ASTRA is advancing!

R&D Hubs Lauch Events

After the successful establishment and embedding of the R&D Innovation and Consulting Hubs into the Lao & Thai HEIs' operations, their set-up was officialised in dedicated **Launch Events** that took place in the 4 partner HEIs in Lao PDR and Thailand, namely the National University of Laos, Savannakhet University, Prince of Songkla University, and Chiang Mai University.

The four Launch Events aimed to inform their audience about the operation of the R&D Hubs in the HEIs, and about potential trends and opportunities for international funding, with a particular focus on expanding connections with the EU. Moreover, the Events provided the perfect opportunity for the official signing of the Hubs' mandates of operation.

Numerous representatives from the educational field, local industries and stakeholders, and international donors attended each of the events in the two countries, further contributing to their visibility and ensuring their continued operation and partnership opportunities.

In the *National University of Laos* (NUOL), the Launch Event was held on April 4th, 2023, and was attended by more than 60 participants.



Launch Event at NUOL

Savannakhet University in Laos also held the Hubs' Launch Event in April, on the 3rd, managing to attract 50 representatives from the educational and local industries sector.



Launch Event at SKU

info@symplexis.eu
www.symplexis.eu

astraproject.eu



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. The European Commission's support for the production of this document does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein. Agreement number: 618963-EPP-1-2020-1-LA-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP

symplexis

Prince of Songkla University in Thailand organised its Launch Event on March 30, 2023, at the Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism, where more than 45 people participated.



Launch Event at PSU

Lastly, in Chiang Mai University the Launch Event was held on March 31st, 2023, with the participation of more than 50 key representatives and stakeholders.



Launch Event at CMU

Joint workshop on regional cooperation in institutional funding

A *joint workshop* between the 4 Asian HEIs (NUOL, SKU, PSU, CMU) was held on September 7th & 8th, 2023, in Luang Prabang, Lao PDR, organised and hosted by NUOL. This joint workshop emphasised the added value of regional and transnational cooperation in pursuing institutional funds in the ICT and social science field in a university context. It also set as a seal and guarantee for the continued and ongoing collaboration and knowledge exchange between the recently established R&D Hubs in the 4 HEIs.



During the workshop, attendees from the 4 HEIs worked together and exchanged Donor & Fundraising Pipelines for collaboration and funding opportunities, as well as case studies in their contexts, discussing their implementation and the lessons learnt. Most importantly, the joint workshop resulted in two new project ideas to be explored and submitted for funding, mainly focusing on the tourism sector.

Monitoring visits

Since the R&D Hubs have been operating on a pilot basis for the better part of 2023, an important aspect for the enhancement of their services is the coaching/mentoring from the EU partners, virtually and on-site. In this context, the EU partners act as Mentors, bringing in their expertise and working together with the HEI staff addressing, pursuing, and securing new funding opportunities in the fields of ICT and social science.

To further support and provide guidance for the operation of the R&D Hubs, *on-site monitoring visits* took place in the four HEIs (NUOL, SKU, PSU, CMU) during November and December 2023.



Monitoring visit at the R&D Hub of Chiang Mai University

Experts from three EU project partners, Symplexis, Athens University of Economics & Business, and University of Florence, had the chance to visit the newly established R&D Hubs and monitor their operation, offering guidance and advice to ensure their smooth and sustained performance.

Issues covered during these visits included the prioritisation of funding opportunities, familiarisation with online proposal submission portals, generation of new project ideas, securing partnerships, structuring the project, setting goals and desired

outcomes, allocating responsibilities, drafting a Gantt chart, budgeting, etc.



Monitoring visit at the R&D Hub of the National University of Laos

Moreover, during the on-site monitoring visits the HEI staff involved in the operation of each R&D Hub had the chance to discuss in detail and get feedback on new project ideas and funding opportunities to pursue, a paramount task to be undertaken in the Hubs functioning.



Monitoring visit at Prince of Songkla University

The on-site visits and mentoring also provided an opportunity for the Hubs to present and examine their long-term sustainability plans.



Monitoring visit at the R&D Hub of Savannakhet University