



THE SMART LEGACY



INTERREG IVC
INNOVATION & ENVIRONMENT
REGIONS OF EUROPE SHARING SOLUTIONS



EUROPEAN UNION
European Regional Development Fund

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When closing a project there is always a moment of looking back and of looking ahead, and when I look ahead, I am sure that SMART EUROPE will have a legacy. The project has resulted in policy improvements that will continue to have an impact in the years to come. This brochure presents the main achievements of SMART EUROPE. In particular, it tells about the experiences of the partners involved and illustrates

how regional policies will be redefined by the project. It also includes an introduction to the toolkit, a tool developed to spread the methodology used in SMART EUROPE. Through the provided QR code, it is possible to download the toolkit directly from our website www.smart-europe.eu

Jan Nico Appelman

Deputy King's Commissioner of the Province of Flevoland

SMART EUROPE

Smart strategies to create innovation-based jobs in regions of Europe

SMART EUROPE is an interregional cooperation project (INTERREG IVC) linking regional and local authorities willing to boost regional employment in innovation based jobs.

In the recent years, many regions have based their economic development strategies on innovation; however these policies are often not designed with job creation as primary objective. The aim of SMART EUROPE is to support decision makers to integrate the creation of employment as additional component in regional development and innovation strategies.

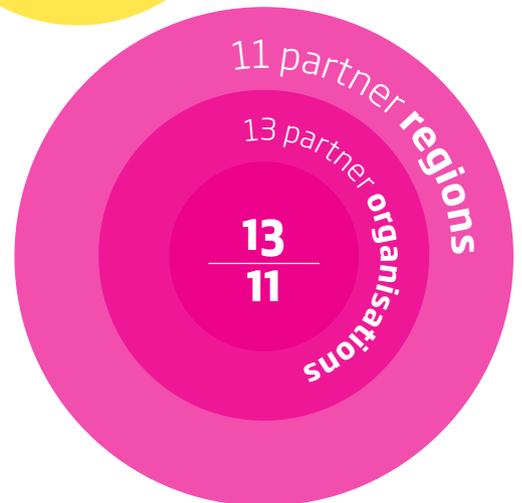
To reach this objective, the project has included the following actions:

- Collection and exchange of good practises in the field;
- In-depth analysis of the innovation system in the partner regions through the peer review methodology;
- Setting up of a customised package of policy instruments and measures to facilitate the creation of innovation-based jobs;
- Development of concrete implementation plans for each partner region;
- Dissemination of the project results and findings to other interested EU Regions.

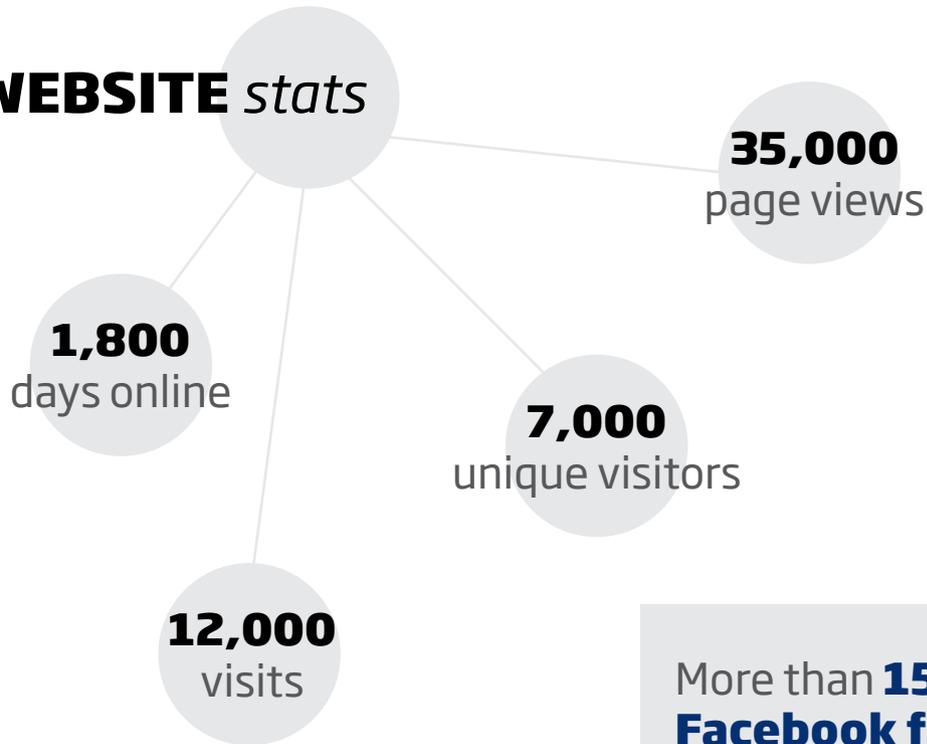
The peer review methodology, key in the project, offered the opportunity to see their situation from a different perspective. The considerations of the reviewers were organised in reports and all the involved Regions agreed on the importance of these documents for the development of their future strategies on innovation and employment.

SMART EUROPE has resulted in a great occasion of exchange, reflection and growth. The partner regions have developed new instruments to face the challenges posed by the crisis and those that will arise in the future and can now set their path towards 2020.

SMART EUROPE *in figures*



WEBSITE *stats*



More than **150 Facebook fans** and **250 Twitter followers**

More than **1,000 participants involved** in dissemination events

SOCIAL *life*

PEER REVIEW

A methodology tailored to Regions



FLEVOLAND

Province of Flevoland

Our SMART EUROPE experience: in Flevoland we are stimulating innovation in several ways, but in the framework of SMART EUROPE we decided to focus on cluster development as a means to boost innovation-based jobs. Therefore, we asked our partners to give us advice on how to improve our regional policy on cluster development through concrete measures. This was the focus of our peer review organised in October 2012. During this week 10 international experts visited several projects in Flevoland. They talked to business owners, studied our economical agenda and investigated the policy on innovation.

The peer team concluded that *«Flevoland has important assets: a central position, innovative entrepreneurs, a young population and an attractive environment. Together with its world class agriculture, the existing infrastructures and its valuable success stories, these are the pillars for the definition of the local development strategy.»* Though the peer review focused on cluster development, the experts advised us also to strengthen the support system for SMEs since, in young economies like Flevoland's, their development helps the region to grow.

The key recommendations that the peer team gave us were:

- Build on your success stories to strengthen your strategy;
- Clarify the importance and potential of the industry to the region and nationally;
- Develop the innovation support system and re-evaluate your SME support system;
- Increase and improve the links between businesses and research centres / universities, at national and international level. Develop clear interfaces with regional research centres, universities and businesses;
- Explore the establishment of business incubators and commercialisation support services alongside research centres;
- Develop dedicated leadership programmes for businesses combined with entrepreneurship training at all education levels.

Jan Nico Appelman, deputy King's Commissioner of the Province of Flevoland, declared: *«I was impressed by the quick and thorough analysis the peer review experts made of the situation in our region. The advice of the peer review team was very useful to us and they came exactly at the right time, since we were in the process of developing our new Economic Agenda for Flevoland. We have directly adopted the recommendations to re-evaluate the SME support system and to integrate new financial instruments to stimulate innovative SMEs in our policy.»*

Our implementation plan: within the SMART EUROPE project Flevoland decided to focus on cluster development as a means to boost innovation based jobs.

The peer review report represented a valid contribution to the development of Flevoland's new regional innovation strategy. The conclusions and recommendations of the peers were included in the Economic Agenda Flevoland 2012 - 2015, adopted by the regional parliament in 2013. The new policy highlights the importance of further strengthening the innovation support system of Flevoland, which includes business incubators, innovation arenas and defines financial support schemes for SMEs.

Further implementation steps will be:

- Focus on the development of the Life Sciences, Agro&Food, Health Care, High Tech Systems and Materials sectors;
- Further examination of the Manchester good practice on incubators development in order to implement the most interesting findings in Flevoland;
- Introduction of an adapted SME support system to stimulate innovation;
- Development of the concept of "innovation arenas" in the region to improve knowledge valorization and to strengthen cooperation between the different stakeholders.

GREATER MANCHESTER

Manchester Metropolitan University

Our SMART EUROPE experience: the focus of the Manchester peer review was partnership working arrangements in the sub region. The topic was selected by stakeholders following our initial Smart Café in 2012 and the need to identify where partners could work better together to boost innovation based job creation, following the removal of regional administrative structures (Regional Development Agencies) in the United Kingdom.

The peer review team came to Manchester in June 2013. The Manchester peer review team was one of the largest as partners felt there was also much to learn from us. A total of 13 peers came from Norway, Finland, Italy, Hungary, Spain, Greece, and the AER. Over the week they met with a total of 21 different stakeholders from Greater Manchester.

The results were presented during the 2014 dissemination conference in Manchester. Professor **Lynn Martin** Director of the Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) Centre for Enterprise confirmed Manchester's commitment to continuous improvement: «*Manchester's world class Universities, advanced knowledge economy, and digital and technology leadership all combine to make the city region a beacon of global excellence for innovation. We welcome the fresh perspective and insights that our Smart Europe partners have contributed to our future strategies and are excited to work with local and European partners to put these strategies into action*».

Our implementation plan: Greater Manchester was, at the time of the review, in a transition period following the removal of the Regional Development Agency and associated public finance reductions. The peer review team observed that there was a large range of different activities taking place in Greater Manchester and that there was a good level of understanding of the need to work closer together by stakeholders, even if it was not always happening.

A number of recommendations are currently being examined for implementation by a range of stakeholders in the sub region including:

- Ensuring that all stakeholders are aware of targets and objectives and increasing ownership at local level;
- The creation of cooperation arenas at all levels where stakeholders can interact;
- Strengthening of ties with EU partners across all programme areas;
- Increasing the synergy between the three main Manchester universities, including multidisciplinary and cross sectoral cooperation opportunities for students between universities (e.g. implementation of the best practice Demola New factory from Tampere, Finland);
- Improving the collaboration between universities and Further Education Colleges and Schools and entrepreneurship in primary schools;
- Create open innovation platforms (including across universities);
- Building more proactive European partnerships, driving them and using them to create added value;
- Improving information to stakeholders on the role of Local Enterprise Partnerships.

VENETO

Veneto Region and Veneto Innovazione

Our SMART EUROPE experience: Veneto has a peculiar and somehow unique entrepreneurial history. During the last 40 years, the region has transformed radically from a rural and manufacturing economy into an advanced and competitive industrial economy. Its development was based especially on SME and clusters.

Recently, the economic crisis has strongly affected the regional economy: the local business environment has struggled to adapt to the new challenges and the increasing “brain drain” of young talents is now threatening the future of the region.

Therefore, the peer review week of February 2013 focused on the development of a new entrepreneurship model and on how high-profile innovation can be supported to retain the young creative and innovative entrepreneurs in Veneto.

During the peer review week, the experts had the opportunity to visit several incubators and to talk with many stakeholders to have an overview on the region. At the end of the week, they started to elaborate their first suggestions. In particular, a reviewer observed that: «*Veneto has some advantages: highly ranked universities and highly educated people in the fields that can drive innovation. However, the connection between education and business appears still weak. A further effort in this field could improve the matching of skills and competences acquired in vocational schools and universities with the needs of companies*».

Marialuisa Coppola, Regional Councillor for Development, Research and Innovation, affirmed: «*For several years now, Veneto Region has focused its development strategy on entrepreneurial innovation. need to work closer together by stakeholders, even if it was not always happening. We strongly believe that our economy will be able to recover from the economic crisis and face*

the challenges of the global economy only by reconfirming and strengthening its strong points in terms of specialisation. In particular, our region can and must rely on a new generation of entrepreneurs who are able to make the most of what has been offered to them, and namely: the high-quality secondary and tertiary education, the efforts for the internationalisation of the regional business environment and the know-how developed by the previous generations of entrepreneurs. The support to innovative start-ups has become a priority for Veneto Region: we are investing not only in the possibilities of single new companies, but in the future of our region. The inputs received from the peer review helped us in setting the future regional strategies».

Our implementation plan: Within the project SMART EUROPE, the Veneto Region (Industry and Crafts Department) and Veneto Innovazione decided to focus on the topic of new innovative companies, and especially on incubators and innovative start-ups.

The experts who came to Veneto for the peer review could observe the numerous already existing initiatives promoting innovative entrepreneurship; however, they also highlighted the gaps and barriers hampering the full expression of the innovation potential of the region.

The most relevant recommendations formulated by the peer reviewers to overcome the obstacles and strengthen the establishment of “new innovative companies” in Veneto were:

- Increasing the strategic coordination between incubators, entrepreneurs and institutions. Veneto Region should have the role of orientation and guide;
- Strengthening entrepreneurship, especially among tertiary students, by increasing the contacts with the business environment;
- Addressing the existing successful business experiences in order to help them to further develop and express their full potential.

Thanks to the feedback provided by the peers, the two partners in Veneto could develop a strategy to foster innovative companies in the region. In particular, the actions to be implemented will be:

- Supporting measures for the creation of innovative knowledge-intensive start-ups and for the reinforcement of innovative start-ups and restart-ups;
- Focusing on the qualification, keeping and attraction of human resources in the innovative entrepreneurship field;
- Ensuring the permanent involvement of the four Universities of the region in the initiatives aimed at supporting innovative entrepreneurship and the knowledge economy;
- Transferring in Veneto the Finnish good practice Demola New Factory though adapted to the specific business structure of the region;
- Earmarking Venture Capital funds for incubators. The incubators will become part of a long-term strategy for the attraction and maintenance of high-skill professionals in the region, essential component for a knowledge-based economy.

With regard to this last point, a specific reference to SMART EUROPE and to the analysis and recommendations formulated in the peer review was included in the ERDF Regional Operational Programme 2014-2020. Thereby, the results of the project have been officially integrated in the long-term policy strategy of Veneto Region.

BOLOGNA

Province of Bologna

Our SMART EUROPE experience: The Province of Bologna identified the development of Innovative and Creative Companies as focus of its participation in SMART EUROPE. The Smart Café organised before the peer review week was an essential starting point to get a first insight on the issue directly from the entrepreneurs operating in Creative Companies.

The peer review week took place in November 2012 and it was essential to get an external point of view on our territory and on its development potential. The peers involved were from Greece (Patras Science Park), Finland (Baltic Institute of Finland in Tampere) and Veneto (Veneto Region and Veneto Innovazione). The Province of Bologna organised meetings and site visits in companies, public and private agencies, trade associations and incubators in order to identify the “anchors of innovation”, always maintaining the focus on Creative Companies.

At the end of the week, the reviewers could already provide a “snapshot” of our area and make useful suggestions. They quickly identified the strong points in terms of services, networks and commitment of the institutions, recognizing the strength of Bologna as a “brand”. However, they also warned us that if innovation is the final goal, there is still a long way to go. The main weaknesses that the peer reviewers pointed out were connected to the lack of confidence in the opportunities offered by the Web 2.0 and to the reticence of the different actors to join forces and start acting as a system.

Graziano Prantoni, the Councillor of Bologna in charge of Businesses and Tourism, expressed his full satisfaction and appreciation for the outcomes of the project. He believes that the peer review was *“an important opportunity to trace a new growth path for the companies in our area, especially for SMEs”* and added: *«It is exactly in times of crisis that strong elements of change and innovation are needed to improve the performance of our businesses. This is the reason why the Province of Bologna participated in SMART EUROPE with firm conviction.»*

The commitment in the project led to a very concrete output: the establishment of BAN Creative, a new branch of the regional Business Angels Network focused on Creative Companies. However, this cannot be considered the only achievement of our participation in SMART EUROPE: we have learned a lot about our territory and we feel now stronger in facing the challenges that the future will bring.

Our implementation plan: The recent flourishing of Creative Companies in the metropolitan area of Bologna highlighted their potential to create employment also in times of crisis. Therefore, all the actions within SMART EUROPE were designed to explore this sector and find out the related “anchors of innovation” already existing in the area, including the public and private institutions providing services targeting this kind of companies. In particular, the Province of Bologna aims to support Creative Companies, such as those in manufacturing, based on a mix of tradition and new technology. A seminar on this topic was organized within SMART EUROPE with the most significant creative enterprises of the territory.

Concretely, thanks to SMART EUROPE, the Province of Bologna will set up a unit dedicated to Creative Companies within BAN Bologna, the regional network matching start-ups and informal investors (the so called Business Angels). This is a direct result of the peer review process, that turned out to be an invaluable opportunity to reflect on the local business environment also from an external and objective point of view, given that all the peer reviewers came from partner regions across Europe.

Ultimately however, it was the continuous and consolidated dialogue with the local creative entrepreneurs that led to the implementation of BAN Creative, the core action of our implementation plan. The first draft of this measure was also discussed during the thematic meetings arranged in the framework of the new Metropolitan Strategic Plan, the context in which the future settings of the Bologna area (soon Metropolitan City of Bologna) are being defined.

ÉSZAK-ALFÖLD

Észak-Alföld Regional Development Agency

Our SMART EUROPE experience: In January 2012 Észak-Alföld Regional Development Agency started implementing the SMART EUROPE tasks. The first one was to set up the common methodology to be used, together with the Assembly of European Regions and some more experienced partners. Besides this coordination work, our most important objective was to find some suggestions to our specific focus: how the regional triple-helix actors' cooperation could boost the regional economy and support innovative ways to create jobs.

The RIS (Regional Innovation Strategy) identifies 3 fields as key sectors of the region: Health, ICT and Food. During the project we already identified three good practices: one from the field of ICT, and another one that deals with Food and Agriculture, while the third one is showing the positive results of the cooperation of a municipality and a regional airport. The three practices are the followings:

1. University & Industry: special trainings offered for university students that enable them to meet the requirement of a regional IT multinational company;
2. Regional Airport & Municipality: a regional airport as it could enhance local job-creation, boost regional economy and also support tourism;
3. Municipality & Public: sustainable business system based on local food production.

Afterwards, in October 2012, nine experts arrived to Észak-Alföld from four different countries to participate to the peer review. During this one-week event we showed the experts coming to our partner regions (from Norway, Finland, Spain and the UK) the employment system as well as the existing support infrastructure for SMEs, and our good practices, while we waited for their suggestions on how to increase efficiency and create more innovation-based jobs in Észak-Alföld region.

One important side effect of this event was the networking activity that started spontaneously amongst the regional stakeholders during the event we organised to introduce them the recommendations prepared by our foreign colleagues at the end of the peer review week. We believe that the good relation between these important regional actors will remain even after the project as we included already a set of actions that we would like to carry out with their cooperation, and as in our Implementation Plan we will focus on the examination and adaptation of the Finnish Demola New Factory model to the Észak-Alföld circumstances.

Our implementation plan: Thanks to the SMART EUROPE project, Észak-Alföld region had the chance to examine foreign good practices as well as to organise a one-week peer review. During the event the region's assumed innovation anchor and focus (how regional triple-helix actors' cooperation could boost regional economy and support the innovative way of job-creation) was introduced to the experts coming from Norway, Finland, Spain and the UK. The Recommendations prepared by these experts were very useful - also containing some great examples and good practices of the experts' home regions. In order to enforce the cooperation of the triple-helix actors, one of the suggestions was, to check the Finnish good practice Demola New Factory, which might help Észak-Alföld to better utilise and unleash the creativity and innovative potential of local citizens and businesses.

In its SMART EUROPE Implementation plan, Észak-Alföld will focus on the process of further evaluating, examining and adapting the Finnish best practice to the Hungarian reality. An analysis will determine if the regional circumstances fit together with the Demola New Factory good practice and what ways of implementation would be the most efficient according to the stakeholders. A workshop will then be organised in Debrecen, with all key regional stakeholders, in order to introduce the Demola system more in detail, as well as its operation, advantages etc., and create a forum for discussion about the future of this initiative in Észak-Alföld. These steps are necessary to support the Észak-Alföld Regional Development Agency to find the most suitable way of implementation of the identified action.

MARAMURES

Maramures County Council

Our SMART EUROPE experience: In our participation in SMART EUROPE, we have particularly appreciated the peer review evaluation process. This was indeed one of the most efficient instruments used in the project, since it has the capacity to really influence the regional sustainable development.

The peer review group visited Maramures between the 8th and 13th of September 2013. The experts from the partner regions were involved in a series of interviews and visits to different innovation actors operating in Maramures county. This enabled them to reflect on the situation in the area and to agree on a set of recommendations that Maramures could consider for the definition of its economic development strategy.

The peer reviewers focused especially on the instruments to boost start-ups and job creation in innovative sectors and to financially support innovative companies. They were also very interested in the methods used to stimulate regional decision-makers to commit to the regional innovation strategy.

The peer reviewers identified that in Maramures, several factors hamper job creation, such as inadequate investments in infrastructure, "brain drain", excessive bureaucracy and high taxation. On the other hand, the region has an important tradition in university research, relatively low labour costs and a positive attitude of the workforce in a well-structured manufacturing sector. These are the strong points on which we shall build up our future regional strategy on innovation.

Our implementation plan: Maramures intends to implement the most relevant recommendations received from the peer reviewers. To this end, the region is currently developing its implementation plan.

In particular, amongst all the suggestions received from the peers, Maramures intends to focus on improving the cooperation between actors at different levels, i.e. public authorities, University and entrepreneurs.

In this respect, Maramures started setting up a consortium for development and innovation called MMTECH, in cooperation with an initiative group formed by the main local stakeholders. MMTECH can be considered as a direct result of the participation of Maramures in SMART EUROPE.

The text of the agreement for setting up the consortium and the rules of procedure have been finalised and are under examination in order to be approved by the local politicians and by the stakeholders of the relevant organisations.

In the near future, the stakeholders that are officially participating in the setting up of this consortium, will be invited by the County of Maramures to become founding members of the MMTECH consortium.

MID SWEDEN

Almi Företagspartner Mitt AB

Our SMART EUROPE experience: The participation in SMART EUROPE was a good opportunity to identify the missing link between entrepreneurs and the innovation system, in order to improve the effectiveness of the regional innovation policies.

The peer reviewers came to Mid Sweden in May 2013 and visited several local organisations, among which the Mid Sweden University, two science parks and the municipality. They also interviewed some companies with different backgrounds and from different sectors.

After these meetings, the reviewers presented a report containing many useful recommendations. In particular, they identified the need to better clarify the role of the different “innovation anchors” (i.e. the key actors in the local innovation system) and better structure the partnerships in the territory. Hopefully, these recommendations will be taken into account both by the administration and by the stakeholders to make the partnership more productive.

Thomas Hägg, Regional Council of Jämtland County, declared: «*Smart Europe and its partners gave us the possibility to exchange experiences and knowledge, for the present and for the future. It enables Mid Sweden to use more tools for our regional development.*»

Tourism is becoming increasingly important for us. An increasing number of professionals and companies in this field are discovering the benefits of offering more “inclusive” destinations. In effect, the issue of “accessibility” in tourism does not only regard people with disabilities, but also other categories and targets. We therefore consider “Tourism for All” as a potential resource for the local and regional economy. Good practices were shown in the peer review report that our partners gave us and an exchange around the issue of “sustainable and accessible tourism” has started between Mid Sweden, Avila and Sör-Tröndelag. In June 2014, a delegation from Avila County returned to visit us for a series of meetings and on-site visits and in September we went

to visit them to learn from their good practice. The colleagues from Avila County showed us a good example on developing tourism for disabled people.

«Parts of our region have already a well-established management of handicap sports events and tourism which we of course would like very much to further develop with partners from the SMART EUROPE network» says **Ulrika Åberg** at the County Administrative Board of Västernorrland.

Our implementation plan: The peer review has been an important instrument for Almi as Regional Agency promoting Innovation and Growth for SMEs in Mid Sweden. The peer review report was distributed to the relevant actors and stakeholders in the region in order to give a broader diffusion to its outcomes.

To make the most of the opportunity offered by SMART EUROPE, Mid Sweden has also participated to good practices exchanges and collected useful suggestions from other partner regions. All these inputs led to an implementation plan which focuses on the topic "Tourism for All".

The following recommendations included in the peer review report can be applied to Tourism:

- Build on your strengths, e.g. outdoor tourism with local focus;
- Focus on specific topics to increase specialization.

The Region wants to be a premium tourist destination and world leading area for research and development in barrier free tourism. The examples shown by our project partners during the good practice exchange will be used to further develop innovative practices in tourism, by focusing in particular on:

- A better knowledge of the needs of the target group;
- Building skills to update the strategies to get the whole community to function in an optimal manner for all citizens, every day and in every situation;

- Arranging workshops to adapt and introduce possible new tools and practices;
- Strengthen the partnership between public and private sectors to produce better results for a stronger position in this market niche (accessible tourism).

The recommendations in the peer review also pointed out the importance to

- clarify the role of the innovation system actors and
- develop jointly projects.

The Regional Council and the County Administrative Board have assigned Almi the task to make a pilot study on growth and innovation aimed at effectively tackle the issue in the next Structural Funds Operational Programme. The results and findings of the project SMART EUROPE will be taken into account in this study, therefore the project will represent an input for the design of the future policies in the region.

WESTERN GREECE

Patras Science Park S.A.

Our SMART EUROPE experience: Western Greece has a high innovation capacity. In the region there are both internationally well-known academic and research institutes, and few, but extremely innovative and competitive technology based companies. The recent decentralized governmental structure and the new European funding period have opened new opportunities for the Region to implement its Smart Specialization Strategy and improve its innovation ecosystem at an operational level. With this aim, Patras Science Park and Western Greece decided to participate in the SMART EUROPE project and benefit from others' experiences and development tools.

The peer review team arrived in Patras in October 2013, and had the opportunity to meet with the major stakeholders of the innovation system, including representatives from the Academia, innovative companies, incubators and the Regional Authority. The peer review team elaborated recommendations in the five main sectors of activity, namely: regional strategy, education and human resources, innovative environment, partnerships and sustainability of the jobs created. The peers recommended the region to focus more on the operational level and translate the regional smart specialization plan into concrete and operational tools. The various stakeholders need to find their own value proposition in the ecosystem and be able to co-compete in order to foster innovation in a competitive, inclusive and sustainable way.

Referring to the challenge of supporting cooperation between the different stakeholders of the innovation system, Mr. **Nikos Thomopoulos**, representing the Intermediate Managing Authority, affirmed: «*The recommendations proposed by the partner regions hit the mark and we will certainly try to incorporate them in our regional strategy. Also the categorization of the examined issues gave us a different and more practical perspective.*»

Furthermore, as far as the interconnection between Academia and business is concerned, the Finnish best practice Demola New Factory was particularly interesting. As Patras Science Park, we are in close contact with Finland to effectively transfer and implement the good practice in cooperation with the Achaia Chamber of Commerce and the University of Patras.

Our implementation plan: In SMART EUROPE, Patras Science Park-Western Greece decided to focus on how to support young entrepreneurship and boost the creation and development of innovative technology based firms. The overall objective was to make the most of the strong academic and research institutions based in the region, as well as of the young highly qualified human resources.

The Region asked the peer reviewers to suggest how to design and implement effective regional policies to foster entrepreneurship, research, technology development and Innovation, as well as to strengthen the partnership between public and private sector. The peers elaborated their recommendations based on the visits and meetings held during the peer review week.

The implementation plan will include the following activities:

- Using of the European funds to support a limited and high risk (but promising) business projects. For other projects, revolving funds (sharing or loans) are preferable, in order to avoid to create a subsidised market;
- Transferring of the good practice Demola New Factory to integrate students in the business process;
- Organising of an open innovation platform;
- Promoting actions to foster the entrepreneurship spirit among graduates;
- Promoting actions aimed at bridging the gap between agriculture and research;
- Developing of a unique Patras model for incubators and science parks;
- Diversifying funding for innovation and project development.

Almost all of the above identified measures require the cooperation between two or more of the regional innovation stakeholders, so partnerships in the region will be strengthened.

TAMPERE

The Baltic Institute of Finland

Our SMART EUROPE experience: In Tampere Region, the acute structural changes in the ICT sector (e.g. Nokia case) and the consequent loss of jobs in the field have brought about the need to proactively identify operational models to overcome the new challenges. Our region has an important industrial history, but its industrial basis must now be renewed and made more suitable to face the challenges of the global business environment.

The SMART EUROPE peer review team came to Tampere to examine the partnership concept "Tampere New Deal", aiming at finding new ways for renewing expertise and developing new businesses, especially in ICT. The peer reviewers attended many presentations from local stakeholders in the fields of innovation, business development and education. After this overview on the local innovation environment, they formulated some very inspiring recommendations regarding education and human resources, partnership building and the sustainability of innovation-based jobs. In particular, they suggested us to start looking at ICT like a "transversal force" underpinning other industries (advertising, marketing, PR industry etc.), instead of considering it like a separated sector. «*A more horizontal approach is needed*» explained by Mr **Geir Tevasvold** from the partner region Sør-Trøndelag «*the perception should change from "ICT as industry" to "ICT for industry". As you will see, this will lead to new partnerships and innovative ideas*».

Mr. **Esa Kokkonen**, Director of the Baltic Institute of Finland, is really satisfied with the results of the peer review process and emphasizes: «*The peer team's call for a different approach in the formulation and evaluation of the Tampere's innovation policy, based more on the storytelling than on facts and figures, was extremely relevant and had an immediate impact in the formulation of the "Tampere innovation story"*».

Indeed the peer review process enabled to get some brilliant ideas from outside, ideas that will

that will contribute to the definition of the future innovation strategy for Tampere.

Our implementation plan: The timing of the SMART EUROPE peer review in Tampere was perfect, as during spring-autumn 2013 Tampere and the Tampere region were finalizing the Tampere proposal for the new Finnish national innovation programme INKA - Innovative Cities 2014-2020. INKA aims at supporting the creation of internationally attractive and competitive innovation ecosystems and knowledge-based business environments in Finland. The peer team's recommendations appeared highly useful for the design of this plan and Tampere was also selected as lead city for the Smart City and the Renewing Industry sub-programmes of INKA. In line with the peer team's recommendations, both sub-programmes emphasize a cross-sectoral approach to ICT, including issues like smart traffic, smart infrastructure, open data and intelligent machines as priority areas for 2014-2020 .

The SMART EUROPE peer review process and the received recommendations reinforced the innovation policies and supported the definition of a smart specialization strategy in the Tampere region. Furthermore, the recommendations from the SMART EUROPE peer review will provide a highly valuable guideline for the preparation of the next programming period 2014-2020, for instance with regard to the calls related to "Smart Cities".

AVILA

Avila County Council

Our SMART EUROPE experience: In Avila County, tourism is the main activity sector. Nevertheless, it is not easy to compete with other national destinations offering sun and beaches: an innovative approach was needed to make Avila an attractive inner tourist destination. With this aim, the Avila County Council took part in the project SMART EUROPE, hoping to get from the peers some useful suggestions. The peer review team came in October 2013 to help us to enhance our promotional activity, by analyzing the situation through formal and informal meetings as well as on-site visits. During an on-site visit at Gredos area in the southern mountains range, our colleagues from Sør-Trøndelag mentioned: *«We are carrying out in Røros municipality, a location quite similar to this rural area, an accurate action to make it a sustainable tourist destination: somehow this could be taken as a reference for Avila.»*

In the framework of this week, Mr. **Ignacio Burgos**, Vicepresident of the Avila County Council and representative for European Affairs & Tourism, stated: *«We should gather further information about this Norwegian good practice to achieve two goals: innovate our way of promoting our tourist destination and learn about the potential tourist profile for offering integrated packages according to their expectations»*. This was the basis for an effective exchange of knowledge and we started to organize a good practice exchange which took place in June 2014. As a result of this, some tangible measures will be implemented in the short term in Avila province.

Our implementation plan: In SMART EUROPE the Avila County Council decided to focus on tourism, a key sector for the local economy with a relevant employment potential. In order to enhance tourism and increase the sustainability of jobs in this field, the peer reviewers formulated three main recommendations, and namely:

- Updating the development strategy for this sector;
- Developing the offer of integrated packages;

- Focusing more on internationalisation.

The Avila County Council built up an Action Plan based on these considerations, including a “Good Practice Exchange” aimed at getting good practice examples and references to implement the above-mentioned recommendations. Thanks to this exchange of knowledge, once officially approved by the board of representatives, the following activities will be implemented in the short-medium term:

- Inclusion of a threefold view on sustainability (economical, environmental and socio-cultural) in the strategy for tourism;
- Development of a Tourism Observatory by Avila County Council in cooperation with the Gran Duke of Alba Research Institution and the University of Salamanca;
- Definition of the specific groups and market niches to target (e.g. accessible tourism, bird watching, star watching);
- Translation into English of the promotional material (including the website and other online resources) to reach foreign tourists;
- Introduction of innovative tools to provide information to tourist (e.g. QR codes, mobile apps, etc.) and improvement of the available information on how to reach Avila and its attractions;
- Creation of a new image and slogan and development of a common branding for the whole area;
- Inclusion of the “story telling” practice in tourist products also to promote the local authentic values;
- Strengthening of the offer of family friendly services;
- Open workshops for handcrafts to help them to get closer to potential customers;
Strengthening of the international oriented activities in the Tourism Degree offered by the University of Salamanca;
- Participation in other European projects aimed at strengthening tourism.

Among the measures identified, some will be implemented directly by the tourism department of the Avila County Council, while others will require the active involvement of the stakeholders of the sector.

SOUTH-TRØNDELAG

Sør-Trøndelag County Authority

Our SMART EUROPE experience: The Province of South-Trøndelag decided join SMART EUROPE to get new ideas on how to strengthen the SMEs located in the area.

In particular, we had observed that the technology competence associated with the important university was underutilized, especially in the districts. Therefore, we asked the peers to look into this issue and give suggestions to improve the situation.

The peer review took place in February 2013 and the peers took on the challenge of how to get the SMEs in the districts to cooperate closer with the university. The reviewers analysis confirmed the county's observations on the underused innovation potential in the region, thereby further strengthening the need to take action to connect the SMEs in the districts to the University.

In order to engage the SMEs in the districts, the "business gardens" set up in various small towns have been trained to advise SMEs on the cooperation opportunities with the University. The "business gardens" provide information on the different incentives schemes available and on how to get in touch with the University staff and departments. In addition, special task forces have been set up in order to initiate SMEs to become engaged in R&D activities. Presently, the main target of this action is the wood product industry: visits and discussions are carried out in this field and several R&D projects are under development.

The participation in the SMART EUROPE project has strengthened the county's ability to support SMEs, and in particular those in the districts, helping to preserve and increase the number of jobs.

Our implementation plan: For the Province of South-Trøndelag, Norway, the participation in the project SMART EUROPE represented a valuable contribution in the process of strengthening the strategy to support SMEs in the Province.

The Province will continue to focus on how to stimulate the SMEs located in the districts to become more engaged in R&D and innovation, now supported by the suggestions given by the peers in the SMART EUROPE project. One important aspect will be the development of new incentives to increase the interest from the University staff to become more actively engaged in R&D cooperation with district companies.

Furthermore, as a part of this focus on SMEs in the districts, a program is being developed aiming at strengthening the companies. The program will be based on the “10 000 small business program” developed by Manchester Metropolitan University, as a result of an intense cooperation. Clearly, the program will be linked to local resources, among others the University, and will reflect the experiences from Manchester as well as relevant Norwegian experiences.

Another important suggestion received from the peers was to focus more on the untapped labour and skills amongst those on benefit. Development programs in this sense will be created, including language training for economic migrants.

Finally, South-Trøndelag is also engaged in an effort to strengthen its tourism industry in cooperation with Avila and Jämtland. A good practise exchange program is underway focusing on these areas.



 **SCAN IT** with your smartphone

THE TOOLKIT

The ultimate guide to the SMART EUROPE methodology

The SMART Europe project partners have worked together for three years in order to shape regional policies in a way contributing to boost employment in innovation-based sectors with a substantial impact on the local economies.

During the years of project implementation, various tools and methodologies have been tested and then amended according to the feedbacks received from the project partners and stakeholders who put them into practice.

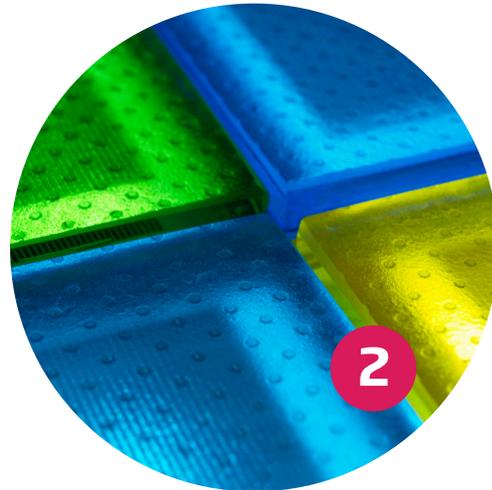
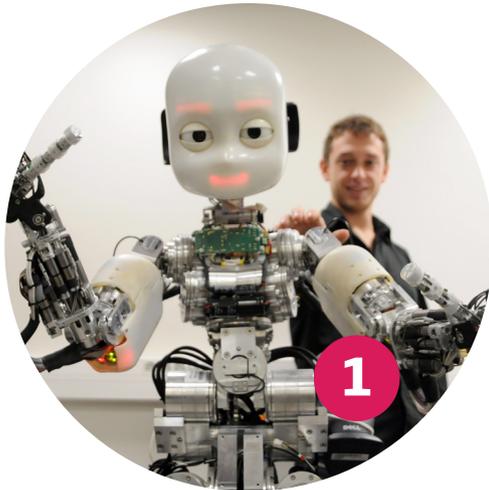
At the end of this process, we would like to make the results available to ensure that other European regions can use the tools we created for different purposes. Thus we have prepared a TOOLKIT, which contains all the necessary information for stakeholders outside the SMART EUROPE partnership who are willing to use our experiences, guidelines and templates to run similar activities in their regions.

The TOOLKIT is conceived to offer a complete guide to apply the same methods we have used and to organise similar activities in different frameworks. It contains a detailed description of the tools tested during the project, like the peer review methodology, the action learning workshops and the SMART EUROPE Café. Real examples of the documents used and of the activities carried out have also been included.

We hope that many other regions will find this TOOLKIT useful and will decide to use the resources we made available in new projects, thus multiplying the results of SMART EUROPE.

INNOVENS *photo contest*

And the winner is...



The Photo Contest **“INNOVENS 2013. Innovation through your lens”** was launched to showcase innovative companies around Europe with the potential of generating job opportunities in their local economies. The theme of the contest was precisely to capture through the lens of a camera possible “smart paths” undertaken by new entrepreneurs to develop innovative ideas and enter the market.

The winner of the contest is Deric Levy Charles-Franck of the CNR of the University Lyon 1 with the picture “matière grise contre la crise”, i.e. grey matter against the crisis. The picture depicts iCub, a little humanoid robot that can understand what people tell him and can anticipate the end of a sentence. This extraordinary technology was made possible thanks to the development of a “simplified artificial brain” which can reproduce certain kinds of recurring connections observed in the human brain. The robot is able to learn, understand new sentences and connect them. The researchers of the Inserm and of the CNR of the University Lyon 1, within the team directed by Peter Ford Dominey, have been working on this robot for many years. The results obtained are very important for the research on certain diseases. For instance, if the model is correct, it will be able to contribute to the understanding of linguistic dysfunctions in Parkinson disease. These researches also contribute to develop the ability of robots to learn languages.

The second place goes to the Spanish team Onyx Solar with their picture “Onyx Solar walkable PV floor”, showing the first photovoltaic anti-slip floor released to the market. This photovoltaic solution integrates the highest quality standards with an appealing design offering a fantastic range of colours and the chance to use a LED backlit system.

Smart Homes, an expert centre on home automation and smart living, comes in third place with the picture “The smartest house of the Netherlands”. The Smartest House is in Eindhoven and provides an experience of home automation so that visitors can fully understand the possibilities that it offers. It is used for different purposes: to showcase the latest products and services, to test and validate new products with end users, and to teach students about the new technologies in the field.



<http://smart-europe.eu>